Florida WILDLIFE

SPECIAL
WATERFOWL
SECTION

MAD FOR SHAD

BORN TO BE
BAGGED

JANUARY, 1958

The Florida Magazine for all Sportsmen

25 CENTS

REGULATIONS FOR 1957-58 HUNTING SEASON

	OPEN SEASON FOR TAKING GAME BIRDS AND GAME ANIMALS				OPEN SEASON FOR TAKING MIGRATORY BIRDS				
DISTRICT	DEER	TURKEY	QUAIL	SQUIRREL	RAIL AND GALLINULE (Marsh Hen)	DOVE	WOODCOCK	WATERFOWL Duck Geese Coot	SNIPE
Day's Bag	1	2	10	10 Gray 2 Fox	15 Sora Rail—25	10	4	4 2 10	8
Season's Bag	2	3				(60 Half-days)			
1st District	Nov. 16 to Jan. 2. Hunting permitted every day EXCEPT Hardee, Manatee, Sarasota, Pinellas, DeSoto, Polk, South of St. Rd. 60, and Hillsborough South of U. S. 92 CLOSED.	Nov. 16 to Jan. 19 EXCEPT Hardee, Manatee, Sarasota, DeSoto, Polk, South of St. Rd. 60 and Hillsborough South of U. S. 92, Nov. 16 to Nov. 21. Hunting permitted every day. Pinellas County CLOSED.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2 Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. Hunting permitted every day.	Sept. 20 to Nov. 24. Hunting permitted every day.	Oct. 5 to Nov. 1 AND Nov. 28 to Dec. 29. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 12 to Jan. 20. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 23 to Jan. 15. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 14 to Jan. 12. Hunting permitted every day.
2nd District	Nov. 16 to Jan. 2. 1st 6 days open. Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open. Mon., Tues. & Fri. closed at all other times. SPECIAL SEASON Gilchrist, Clay, Alachua, Bradford, Union, and that part of Baker, Nassau, and Columbia South of U. S. 90 from Jacksonville to Lake City and that part of Columbia and Suwannee South and East of St. Rd. 247 from Lake City to the Suwannee River, Nov. 16 to Dec. 8, 1st 6 days open, Mon., Tues., & Friday. closed at all other times. That portion of Columbia South of St. Rd. 18 and East of U. S. 441 CLOSED.	Nov. 16 to Jan. 19, 1st 6 days open, Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open, Mon., Tues., & Fri., closed at all other times. EXCEPT Clay, Alachua, Bradford, Union, that part of Baker, Nassau and Columbia, South of U. S. 90 from Jacksonville to Lake City and that part of Columbia and Suwannee South and East of St. Rd. 247 from Lake City to the Suwannee River, Nov. 16 to Dec. 8, 1st 6 days open, Mon., Tues., & Fri. CLOSED at all other times. SPECIAL GOBBLER SEASON Mar. 29 to April 6—1/2 hour before sunrise to 12 noon. That portion of Columbia South of St. Rd. 18 and East of U. S. 441 CLOSED AT ALL TIMES.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. 1st 6 days open Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open. Mon., Tues., & Fri., closed at all other times.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. 1st 6 days open Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open. Mon., Tues., & Fri., closed at all other times.	Sept. 20 to Nov. 24. Hunting permitted every day.	Oct. 5 to Nov. 1 AND Nov. 28 to Dec. 29. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 12 to Jan. 20. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 23 to Jan. 15. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 14 to Jan. 12. Hunting permitted every day.
3rd District	Nov. 16 to Jan. 2. Hunting permitted every day. Okaloosa and Walton open Nov. 16 to Dec. 2 and Dec. 19 to Jan. 2. Washington County & Holmes County CLOSED. Escambia & Santa Rosa CLOSED except within Eglin Field and Blackwater Management areas.	Nov. 16 to Jan. 19. Hunting permitted every day. SPECIAL GOBBLER SEASON Mar. 29 to April 6—1/2 hour before sunrise to 12 noon.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2 Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. Hunting permitted every day.	Sept. 20 to Nov. 24. Hunting permitted every day.	Oct. 5 to Nov. 1 AND Nov. 28 to Dec. 29. Hunting permitted every day. That part of Franklyn Co. East of St. Rd. 30 and a line extending from the point where St. Rd. 30 turns West to the water line and including all of Alligator Point shall be closed to the taking of dove during the Oct. 5 to Nov. 1 portion of the Dove season.	Dec. 12 to Jan. 20. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 23 to Jan. 15. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 14 to Jan. 12. Hunting permitted every day.
4th District	Nov. 16 to Jan. 2. Hunting permitted every day. Monroe County closed to Key Deer.	Nov. 16 to Jan. 19. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. Hunting permitted every day.	Sept. 20 to Nov. 24. Hunting permitted every day.	Oct. 5 to Nov. 1 AND Nov. 28 to Dec. 29. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 12 to Jan. 20. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 23 to Jan. 15. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 14 to Jan. 12. Hunting permitted every day.
5th District	Nov. 16 to Jan. 2. First 6 days open, Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open. Mon., Tues., & Fri., closed at all other times.	Nov. 16 to Jan. 19. First 6 days open, Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open, Mon., Tues., & Fri., closed at all other times.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. 1st 6 days open, Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open, Mon., Tues., & Fri. Closed at all other times.	Nov. 16 to Feb. 2. 1st 6 days open. Dec. 25 to Jan. 2 open, Mon., Tues., & Fri., closed at all other times.	Sept. 20 to Nov. 24. Hunting permitted every day.	Oct. 5 to Nov. 1 AND Nov. 28 to Dec. 29. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 12 to Jan. 20. Hunting permitted every day.	Nov. 23 to Jan. 15. Hunting permitted every day.	Dec. 14 to Jan. 12. Hunting permitted every day.

ALL DATES SHOWN ARE INCLUSIVE

VOL. 11 NO. 8

Florida WILDLIFE

JANUARY, 1958

★

Published monthly by the
FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION
Tallahassee, Florida

★

**Dedicated to the
Conservation, Restoration, Protection of Our Game and Fish**

★

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CHUCK SCHILLING, Fishing Editor EDMUND McLAURIN, Gun Editor

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Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission

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THE KEY DEER

Dear Sir:

To see the "Deer Stalker" by Eric Wahleen in your magazine is like seeing "Abstract Art" in the National Gallery. It does not belong there.

Then to think that your magazine made no mention of the efforts of Congressman Bennett's splendid fight to get bill passed to protect the Toy Deer, is hard to understand.

Emory Avant
Washington, D.C.

● *The Key Deer has long been protected by laws as set forth by Florida and the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Congressman Bennett was instrumental in winning favorable action in Congress this year for a Key Deer Refuge which has been sought for many years by conservationists throughout the nation. The Bill provides that land be obtained in a specific area for the eventual establishment of a National Key Deer Refuge.*

GUN FOR SALE

Gentlemen:

Enclosed is my new address for future issues of FLORIDA WILDLIFE.

I have a Savage .410 under and .22 over gun I must sell. Could you suggest where I might sell it? Due to an amputation I can no longer use a gun.

George H. Lynch
St. Petersburg, Fla.

● *Any interested buyer can contact Mr. Lynch at 524½ 16th Ave., So., St. Petersburg, Fla.*

CORTISONE FOR SNAKE BITE

Dear Sir:

In your November issue, the most significant new fact that you have turned up in a long time is the second section of Chuck Schilling's Fishing Department on the efficacy of cortisone in cases of snake bite.

It will be a great boon to all your outdoor readers—which means all your readers—if you can give us a full length article in one of your early spring issues on the methods of using cortisone.

Such an article should cover at least all the following points:

1. Can it be used in the field, or is its uses confined to administering in a doctor's office or hospital?
2. How is it to be administered, and how much should be used?
3. If by hypodermic (probably), is it to be injected at the site of the wound or intravenously?
4. What are the precautions to be observed in its use?
5. What "side effects," if any, are to be expected?
6. Stress the need for "supportive treatment" (first aid) even when cortisone is available.
7. What care should be given the patient after treatment with cortisone?

An article in good, plain, simple language that everyone can understand is what we need. It may save the lives of some of your readers next summer.

F. M. Weston
Pensacola, Florida

THE COVER

From an Ektachrome by Morrie Naggiar

Mallards, blacks, pintails, canvasbacks — Whatever your preference in waterfowl you can find it in Florida. Three-quarters of the Atlantic Flyway's ducks enjoy the abundant hospitality of the Sunshine State at some time during each winter season. A fair representation of birds from the Mississippi Flyway further increases the state's wintering duck population, especially in that section along the northwest Gulf Coast.

With a vast number of potential hunting spots, it is experience and plenty of shooting ground prospecting that provides the best assurance of success. The hunters on this month's cover obviously made a good choice in picking their hunting area. Good shooting put down their limits of mallards.

FLORIDA FISHING

Gentlemen:

Enclosed is a check for my subscription to FLORIDA WILDLIFE. I just spent several days fishing near Panama City and first found out about your magazine at the camp we stayed in. I only get to Florida once or twice a year but your magazine is good reading no matter where you live. Please publish more fishing articles and are there any books on fishing in Florida that I can buy.

K. K. Anderson
Montgomery, Ala.

● *Free fishing pamphlets are available by writing to the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, I.&E. Division, Tallahassee, Fla. There are numerous other books on Florida Fishing that can be purchased at your local book store. "Fishing Florida's Waters" by Phil Francis, published in 1956, carries considerable information on both fresh water and salt water fishing.*

THREE MORE YEARS

Dear Editor:

I just received my December issue of FLORIDA WILDLIFE and an expiration notice. I hasten to you my renewal—this time for three years. Your magazine gets better all the time and pictures by W. H. is the best outdoor artwork I have ever seen.

B. Calhoun
Jacksonville, Fla.

COTURNIX QUAIL

Dear Sir:

The November hunting issue was one of the best magazines I have ever read. I was interested in the article about Coturnix Quail because I thought they were the future game bird for this country. I did not know that they flew away so easily and were hard to stock. Maybe if enough of them are stocked all around, there will someday be enough in every state for good hunting.

George Kling
Atlanta, Ga.

HUNTING PROBLEMS

Dear Editor:

Mr. McLaurin's article in the November issue was very good. I have a large farm and was happy to let hunters use it until they started to destroy my private property. I now keep the farm posted and only let some neighbors on once in awhile. I guess you have the same problems in Florida.

I also liked the story called "An Extra Duck In Your Bag." I do a lot of duck shooting up here and would lose a lot if I didn't have a retriever.

G. Blanchard
Richmond, Va.

HUNTING AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

By HORACE LOFTIN

Florida crackers who hunted 50 to 75 years ago sadly shake their heads about modern times. Bears were real bears back then, they say, and every buck was a twelve-pointer. Bobcats up every tree, and 'gators big enough to swallow a cow.

Those old-timers should have hunted in Florida ten thousand years ago! Then they would know what the state's "good old days" really were like.

Florida was just a cub back then—geologically speaking. The peninsula had emerged from the sea a mere million or two years before, much too late to be the home of the mighty dinosaurs. Those great reptiles had ruled the earth and disappeared millions of years before Florida became dry land.

But from the beginning of the Ice Age—roughly a million years ago—to about the time Man appeared in Florida, the peninsula was host to a variety of large mammals, comparable the big game region of modern Africa.

Hornless rhinoceroses, larger than any in Africa today, snorted grumpily on the Florida lowlands. Several species of elephantine mastodons browsed on the lush growth of the peninsula. Fierce bands of wolves chased herds of fleet, three-toed horses. American camels roamed the hills of central Florida.

Tapirs lolled in swamp water, while giant beavers built their dams across crystal-clear streams. Saber-toothed tigers stalked the great ground sloth. The Florida lion and two species of extinct cougars ruled the woodlands.

Besides these more spectacular mammals, most of the present day animals were already on hand. Racons, oppossums, cotton-tails, squirrels and other small creatures were the prey of the great flesh-eaters.

How did this multitude of animal life come to be in Florida?

Some 70 million years before the narrow bit of land we call Florida raised its head from the ocean depths, the continents of North and South America became joined by a land bridge—Central America. Across this new land, South American animals began a migration northward, lasting thousands of thousands of years.

Eventually, these southern hemisphere animals — like the capybaras, porcupines, armadillos, sloths and opossums — found their way into the northern continent. They spread throughout North America, and some drifted over into the Florida peninsula. It was this land bridge that accounts for so many typically South American animal types being found in North America.

(Incidentally, many forms we think of as being South American actually originate in the northern continent, migrating southward over the land bridge of Central America. Tapirs and the camel-like llamas and alpacas are of North American origin.)

Then about a million or so years ago, a great change took place in the earth's climate. Enormous masses of ice moved down from the Arctic region, turning much of temperate North America into a vast ice-box. Bears, tapirs, camels, mastodons, rhinos and other beasts native to the northern hemisphere moved southward before the encroaching glaciers. Many of these funneled into the Florida peninsula to find a haven from the ice.

Florida was a winter resort a million years ago.

During much of the Ice Age—which lasted till about 25,000 years ago — Florida's climate was somewhat cooler than it is now. But the general pattern of woodlands, palmetto scrubs, jungle hammock and swamp probably prevailed then as now. In the course of its many advances and retreats, the glacial ice probably never came closser than 500 miles to Florida.

The great Ice Age mammals in Florida were about gone by 25,000 to 10,000 years ago. One half to two thirds of the entire Ice Age animal species has vanished, leaving only minor forms in much smaller numbers —the squirrels, rabbits, raccons, etc., and two species of deer, the black bear, and a few flesh-eaters.

What happened to the larger mammals?

No one knows the answer to this riddle. There are almost as many scientific guesses as there are students of Florida pre-history. Some say the great mammals became over-specialized. The saber-toothed tiger, for instance, developed such large canine teeth that he may have been hindered in feeding. The colossal size of the mastodons may have made them cumbersome, unable to find enough food to sustain themselves or unable to hide themselves from the beasts of prey.

Another cause leading to the fall of the great mammals may have been the enormous numbers of animals in the restricted area of the peninsula. A more likely cause may have been sudden changes of climate and vegetation in Florida, leading to death or emigration of the giants.

It is common knowledge that Man has played an important part in the extinction or near-extinction of many groups of animals. His thoughtless slaughter of animals, his fires, his industrial wastes, his drainage ditches and cleared lands, have often wrought destruction on modern wildlife.

Primitive man was in Florida at least 10,000 and

(Continued on Page 38)

FLORIDA CLUB NEWS

BROWARD AIRBOATS

ONE OF THE MORE ACTIVE sportsmen and conservation clubs within the Everglades Region, the Broward County Airboat Association, recently held a wild hog barbecue at Giacin's Camp in Conservation Area #3. (The hogs, incidentally were legal hogs taken in another area of the state where they are not protected by closed season and the Commission was notified that wild hog was going to be 'qued). The purpose of the event other than to have a fine time, had by all, was to get the feel of the hunting seasons. Highlights in addition to the wonderful barbecue and trimmings prepared by the wives, included a frog jumping contest, the record breaking jump measuring 46 inches.

The Broward County Airboat Association meets every third Tuesday at the Davie Chamber of Commerce Building, Davie, Florida. This club, throughout the year, is planning many outstanding events for its members; airboat races, barbeques, and other social and field activities.

The members of this club are continuously working with and assisting Wildlife Officers and other Commission personnel within the Sawgrass area.

Officers of the Broward County Airboat Club are Bill Rabenau, President, K. L. Dunworth, Secretary, and Wes Sarvis, immediate Past President. ●

Federation Notes

By CHARLES WATERMAN

THE FIRST STAFF MEETING of the Florida Wildlife Federation was held Nov. 3 at the office in DeLand with Dr. H. R. Wilber, Federation president, as chairman.

Attending were Hubert Robertson, executive vice president; Doris Southwell, secretary; Fred Gill, treasurer; Tommy Anderson, Sam DuBon, Kenneth Friedman and John Griffin, executive vice presidents; Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Baggett, representing the third region; Eric Watson, legislative chairman, and Bob Dahne, information and educational chief for the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

The executive vice president was appointed chairman of the executive committee composed of the five regional vice presidents.

Treasurer Fred Gill reported a bank balance of $1,056.40 and $44 in cash as of Nov. 1. The Federation expects about $400 more from the yearbook and some repayment from Sears Foundation and Sears donations.

It was voted to form a trusteeship to direct the educational fund of the Federation in accordance with Tax Law 501 C-3, the trusteeship to be prepared by an attorney representing the trustees. Necessary legal filings in conjunction with the charter or application forms are to be prepared by an attorney.

Directors at the annual meeting in Clearwater had requested the Federation to create the tax-deductible status in accordance with Tax Law 501 C-3. Dr. Wilber explained the tax program. Sidney Chase of Sanford and Stanley Taylor of Daytona will serve as trustees of the C-3 Corporation or trust fund together with either Watson or Wilbur and a separate bank account will be established for the fund.

Bob Dahne reported that the Game Commission is buying bumper strips to promote conservation and the sale of fishing licenses and suggested that the Federation distribute them to local organizations for "sale" on a donation basis. Ten cents per strip could be put into a revolving fund toward printing of next year's strips with the rest of the money collected going to the local club — possibly for Federation dues. The strips will read "Let's Go Fishing" and "Join A Sportsman's Club." It was voted to accept the Game Commission's offer. It was suggested that the Federation order extra bumper strips in support of the sportsmen's fight against state constitutional revision. These would be provided by Kenneth Friedman at cost and would be paid for by the Federation and distributed along with those from the Game Commission.

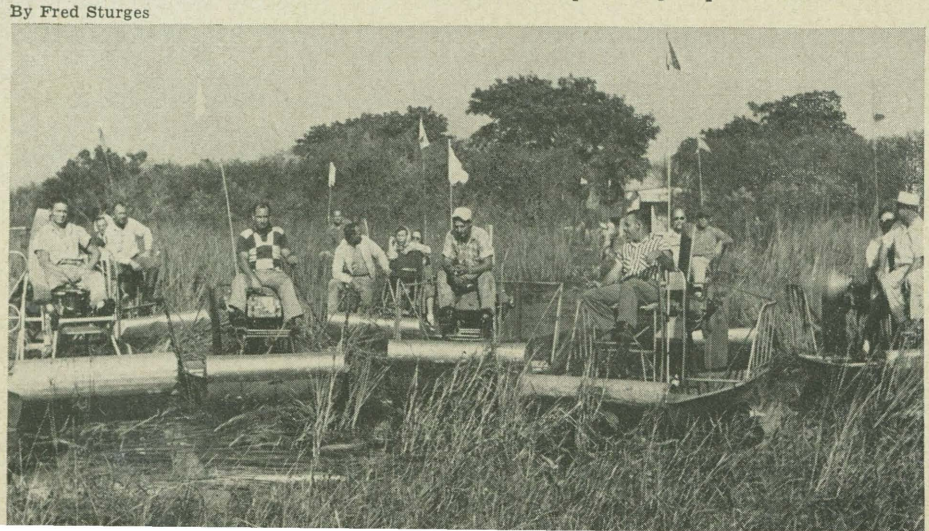
Dr. Wilber presented a plan for admission of women's clubs and garden clubs to the Federation, Mrs. Southwell was named to direct the project.

The group outlined a plan for combating the proposed constitutional revision.

Sam DuBon was appointed state chairman of national affairs and Hubert Robertson was named state membership chairman. The state committee for selecting the Sears

Airboat Meet. Members of the Broward County Airboat Association gather for wild hog barbecue in the 'glades. The Association members own forty of the speedy marsh sleds.

By Fred Sturges



regional awards is to be composed of Dr. Wilber, Hux Coulter, L. Hollingsworth, Dr. Watson, Bob Ingle, Bob Dahne and Charles Waterman.

It was voted to send a resolution opposing the bulkhead line north of Anclote Key (east of Tarpon Springs) as advertised in a New Port Richey paper.

Dr. Wilber was elected as delegate to the National Federation meeting.

It was voted to alter the by-laws so that the annual meetings could be held in September rather than in October. In making the proposal, DuBon said attendance should be better under such a system because the hunting season comes too soon after October sessions. ●

Florida Wildlife Federation officers are addressed by Commission's I.&E. Chief, Bob Dahne, during a recent meeting in DeLand. Standing, left to right: Tommy Anderson, Fred Gill, Mrs. Cleve Baggett, Sam DuBon, John Griffin, Kitten Hollihan, and Dahne.

Seated, left to right: Eric Watson, Cleve Baggett, Dr. H. R. Wilber, Hubert Robertson and Doris Southwell.

A. D. ALDRICH, Game & Fish Commission director, made a progress report at a meeting of the Northwest Florida Sportsmen's Association at DeFuniak Springs on Oct. 26.

The session was attended by 25 representatives of sportsmen's groups in addition to conservation officials including James Bickerstaff, regional manager of the Game Commission; Charles Smith of the Department of Agriculture; Forrest Holland, Game Commission chairman and Don Southwell, Fifth District commissioner.

John Kennedy of the Department of Conservation gave an explanatory talk concerning his department's boat licensing plan.

Matt Wisenhunt, Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission Game Management Technician, gave a report on the use of bull-dozed areas for deer feed, highlighting the fact that areas where heavier vegetation has been cleaned off and second growth natural foods allowed to grow have produced excellend deer forage. This procedure, as tried at Eglin Field has proved more satisfactory and cheaper than the old plan of food planting, Mr. Wisenhunt said.

Dr. H. R. Wilber, president of the Florida Wildlife Federation, gave an explanation of the unpopular procedure of the legislature in attempting abolishment of the game commission. The plan would be to put hunting and fishing license funds into the state's general fund. Under this arrangement, Wilber said, the funds would be usable by the Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission only after re-apportionment by the legislature. He said he felt the legislature is so busy that its members lack an understanding of their movement and that he hoped the 1958 meeting of the Federation might be held in Tallahassee, enabling members and their families to remonstrate in person against the proposed constitutional revision. He expressed regret that the proposed revision is so written as to make it necessary for the bad parts to destroy the good.

Charles Smith of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, currently working on the problem of screw worm infection of Florida animals, announced that a fly breeding and producing factory will soon be in operation at Sebring. That installation is expected to produce and liberate 50 million flies per year after treating them by cobalt irridiation which renders them sterile. The plan has entirely eradicated screw worm in some areas where it has been used, Smith said. The cost of the program is expected to be in the neighborhood of 10 million dollars and the money is already available.

The fly eradication program can be aided by sportsmen in two ways, Smith said. First, when hoplessly afflicted animals are found they should be killed and either burned or buried immediately; second, cases should be reported either to the Department of Agriculture or the nearest Game Commission contact. Wilber commented that the screw worm program is a great step in conservation produced entirely through biological study.

At the business session, McDavid Giddens was named representative to the Florida Wildlife Federation from the Northwest district and has assumed the duties of vice president for his district.

The meeting was closed Sunday following an observation trip to the Jim Woodruff Dam to observe planting of food areas for geese and the construction of facilities for the pinioned geese permanently residing at the new goose preserve.

Two dove shoots, one on Saturday and the other following the closing meeting, rounded out the program. ●

muzzle flashes

By EDMUND McLAURIN

During the past twelve months the Editor of MUZZLE FLASHES has had an unusually heavy volume of mail from FLORIDA WILDLIFE readers seeking specific information on shooting subjects.

All letters, whether sent direct, or forwarded by the magazine, were given individual attention and reply. In some cases replies were quite lengthy, due to the scope and technicalities applying to the particular phase of shooting activity discussed.

In line with the annual custom of devoting the January issue firearms section to questions and answers from readers and Firearms Editor respectively, a few of the many questions, considered of pertinent interest and value to the largest number of readers, are repeated and given open column answers this month. Individual replies, by letter, have already been made, and the same policy will be adhered to during 1958. Every effort will be made to continue to give FLORIDA WILDLIFE readers both accurate and helpful information.

Question: I wish to know about the Florida hunting, fishing and boating laws as they apply to sportsmen. I wrote the Game Commission for this information, but received only folders on fresh water fishing and hunting regulations.

Answer: The Florida Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission correctly sent you the regulations coming within its legal scope of operations. It does not also enforce the general gun laws, as covered in Section 790 of the Book of Florida Statutes, nor does it have the authority or responsibility for enforcing the salt water fishing and boating regulations.

For copies of regulations, or specific information on salt water fishing and boat licensing, address the Dept. of Conservation, Tallahassee.

For an excerpt of the Florida Statutes — Section 790 — applying to firearms, their general possession, transportation and use, write the Attorney General's office, State of Florida, Tallahassee.

Each named department of our state government has its own specific duties and set of regulations. You have to write each individually to assemble a complete file of information on existing Florida hunting, fishing, general firearms and boating laws. It is your responsibility to keep informed on current laws.

Question: Why do autoloading shotguns and rifles jam more often than other types?

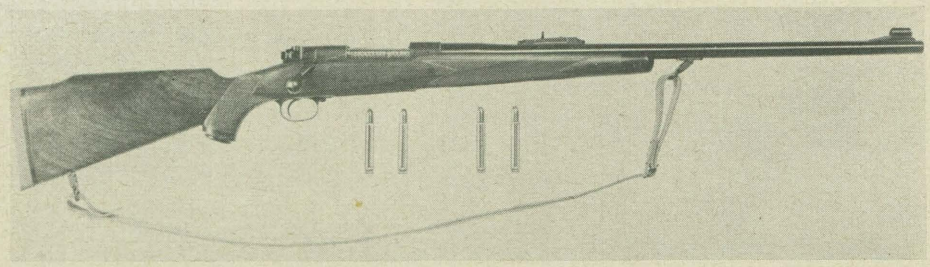
Answer: Autoloaders are primarily mechanical weapons—that is, after the first round of ammunition is fed into the chamber and fired, unlocking of the breech block, extraction and ejection of the empty case, and reloading of a fresh, unfired round is independent of any manual action by the shooter. Anything that interferes with any stage of the full-scale operation will cause a jam.

There are any number of causes of jams in autoloading weapons.

In shotguns, incorrect adjustment of recoil control spring or gas ports, in relation to type of shells used (low velocity or high velocity) is a frequent cause of jams. Scuffed shell ends, where the crimp folds over, is another cause. Gradual accumulation of grease, dirt and powder residue is a third cause. Occasionally a gun is encountered that does not pick up and feed the second shot at the proper angle for smooth feeding into the gun's chamber. This last will require attention by a competent local gunsmith or the gun's manufacturer.

In rifles, accumulated dirt and powder residue account for a large percentage of jams during firing of autoloaders. Sometimes a badly worn extractor will fail to withdraw a fired case, as can also happen in a shotgun, leaving the empty hull in the chamber. Aged brass cases, especially if reloaded a number of times or long subject to corrosion, may crack at their necks, swell unduly and stick to the walls of the rifle's chamber.

Keep all autoloading type firearms clean and in perfect mechanical condition. Those of .22 caliber are particularly sensitive to the effects of accumulated dirt and powder residue, and to even minor mechanical imperfections. Make it a habit to clean a .22 caliber auto-



If proper stock fit and a recoil pad do not sufficiently reduce bothersome recoil, change to a rifle or shotgun of lighter recoil. Many gun models, like the illustrated Winchester Mod. 70, are available in a variety of calibers.

loader often. I open the breach of mine after each day's use and brush out the interior mechanism with a small brush dipped in mineral spirits, taking care to remove collected dirt from the recesses of breach block and breech. Every 250-500 rounds through one of my .22 caliber autoloading rifles, I remove the breech block and give the interior of the rifle a through cleaning.

Most of the modern autoloaders, whether rifle, shotgun or pistol, are designed for easy disassembly of major parts for cleaning.

Question: Old guns and historical weapons interest me. Are there any publications that specialize on those subjects?

Answer: There are several. THE AMERICAN ARMS COLLECTOR, 307 Colonial Court, Towson 4, Maryland, and THE GUN REPORT, P.O. Box 111, Aledo, Illinois, are two of the slick-paper publications that put particular emphasis on old guns, period pieces and famous firearms personalities.

In addition, THE AMERICAN RIFLEMAN, 1600 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Washington, and GUNS MAGAZINE, 8150 N. Central Park Avenue, Skokie, Illinois, seldom publish an issue that does not contain at least one article about firearms of the past.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE will shortly (probably in the February 1958 issue) carry an illustrated text on old and unusual guns owned by members of the Florida Gun Collectors' Association.

Question: This hunting season I am sure that I missed getting my deer because extra .30-30 cartridges in my hunting coat pocket clicked together as I attempted a stalk that would put me within sure killing range. I know you're a deer hunter. How do you overcome that problem?

Answer: I, personally, use a Mershon all rubber cartridge pack that slips on my belt. Each unfired cartridge is housed in its own rubber-walled compartment, and does not come in physical contact with any of its similarly carried companions.

Autoloading rifles, shotguns and pistols should be kept scrupulously clean and used with proper ammunition if annoying jams are to be avoided.

Consequently, there is no possibility of their clicking together at the wrong moment. Also, bullet points are protected and the rubber-housed cartridges stay secure in the cartridge pack until manually removed.

The Mershon cartridge pack comes in red or black. I prefer the black color.

It is surprising how far a metallic click can be heard in quiet woods. Besides taking precautions against ammunition clicks and rattles, I slip soft rubber tubing over the objective ends of my neck-carried binoculars to overcome the possibility of noisy contact with a shirt button.

Question: My shoulder is sore and bruised on every occasion I fire a number of shots from either my .30-06 or my 12 ga. shotgun, yet a friend who engages in shooting practice with me is not bothered at all when he uses the same guns. Do you have an explanation for this?

Answer: Let's first consider basic facts before I venture an opinion: You both are getting the same foot pounds of recoil from the respective guns — approximately 17½ foot pounds from each shot fired from the .30-06 rifle and about 24 f.p. of recoil from the 12 ga. shotgun (if you are using field velocity shotgun shells—more if you are shooting the high velocity loadings). The difference is that you are obviously feeling the recoil more than your friend. So much for facts!

My belief is that stock fit is different for you from that enjoyed by your friend; in brief, due to differences in physique, the gun stocks may fit him more naturally than in your case, with the result that gun recoil is better distributed throughout his arms and body than yours.

Also, your friend may be properly positioning the butt plate firmly against his shoulder and cheek against comb for each shot, whereas you may be supporting both rifle and shotgun only lightly at contact points of shoulder, stock comb and trigger-hand grip, to the degree that rifle and shotgun tend to have more freedom to recoil harshly. The recoil is a fixed factor—just like gravitational pull on a bullet, whether dropped from the hand or simultaneously fired from a rifle barrel; the idea is to make it less effective

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FISHING

By CHUCK SCHILLING

IN FLORIDA WILDLIFE for October, I wrote about a wonderful knot I learned from Dave Farrand of Michigan, called the Surgeon's Knot. This knot is used to tie strands of monofilament together, and, in my book, replaces the barrel, or blood, knot as in tapered leaders in fly fishing or in tying a heavy length of mono leader to the terminal end of your lighter spinning line. It's a good knot, and I'm sure many FLORIDA WILDLIFE readers will be putting it to good use in the years to come.

In the same October issue, I made the mistake of mentioning two other unusual and virtually unknown fishing knots. Unfortunately, I did not describe them. These were the "Tube Knot," used to tie a leader butt to a fly line, and the "Keys Knot," used to tie a lighter strand of mono leader to a braided casting line. My mail has been full of letters from anglers these past weeks, all asking to hear more about these other knots.

One of the hardest things to do is draw pictures of complicated knots so readers can understand how to tie them. At best, this is a poor substitute for personal instruction. This is why I dodged the issue in the October column, but at your insistence, I'll do my best now.

The Tube Knot

If there was ever a knot that needed to be developed, it was this one. Joining a leader butt to the end of a fly line has always been one of the most vexing problems in fly fishing. Like most fly rod men, I've had my troubles, and I've tried all kinds of methods. I am one fly fisherman who just can't be happy with a perfection loop connection between line and leader. In fact, I'm not happy about joined loops as a connection any time or anywhere.

I used to sit up nights, splicing leader butts to the ends of fly lines, after pushing the leader thru the center of the line for half an inch or so and then out thru the side of the line. This connection is then finished off with a whip finish and varnished. For several years, I used the patented metal eye on a pin with barbs that goes into the hollow line, and while I never had any trouble with this gadget pulling out, I was always afraid it was going to, and I didn't like it.

For years, I settled on splicing a small loop in the end of the fly line and tying my leader into this loop with a jam knot. This loop is made by fraying out the fibers in about half an inch of the end of the fly line and binding these frayed fibers back into the line with varnish and a whip finish. This loop should be as small as possible so it will pass thru the guides freely. This connection was satisfactory but required a good deal of time and effort to tie.

In the tube knot, I think we have the perfect answer. All you need is a small, 2-inch piece of metal tubing. The inside diameter should be just large enough to accept the heaviest leader you are likely to use (see illustration).

When tying this knot, be sure to leave ample tying ends so you have something to pull on to bring the knot up tight after finishing. The tube is held parallel with the end of the fly line, and the knot is tied with the monofilament end around both tube and fly line. The only purpose of the tube is to get the end of the mono back under the loops after the knot is tied.

Like all friction knots, the strength of this one lies in the number of wraps. Fewer wraps have less strength — more wraps greater strength. Five or six wraps are enough on the average, but more are indicated if the tackle is going to see extreme usage.

After the loops are in place, the end of the monofilament is run thru the tube under the loops. The tube is then removed. Now, holding the loops in place with the thumb, pull the knot up tight, working the slack out of first one side and then the other. If you tie the knot carefully and properly, the completed job will look like a perfect barrel knot with each turn neatly in place. After you pull it up really tight, clip the

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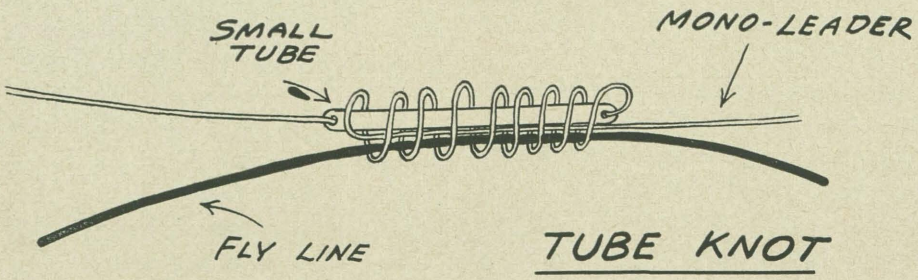
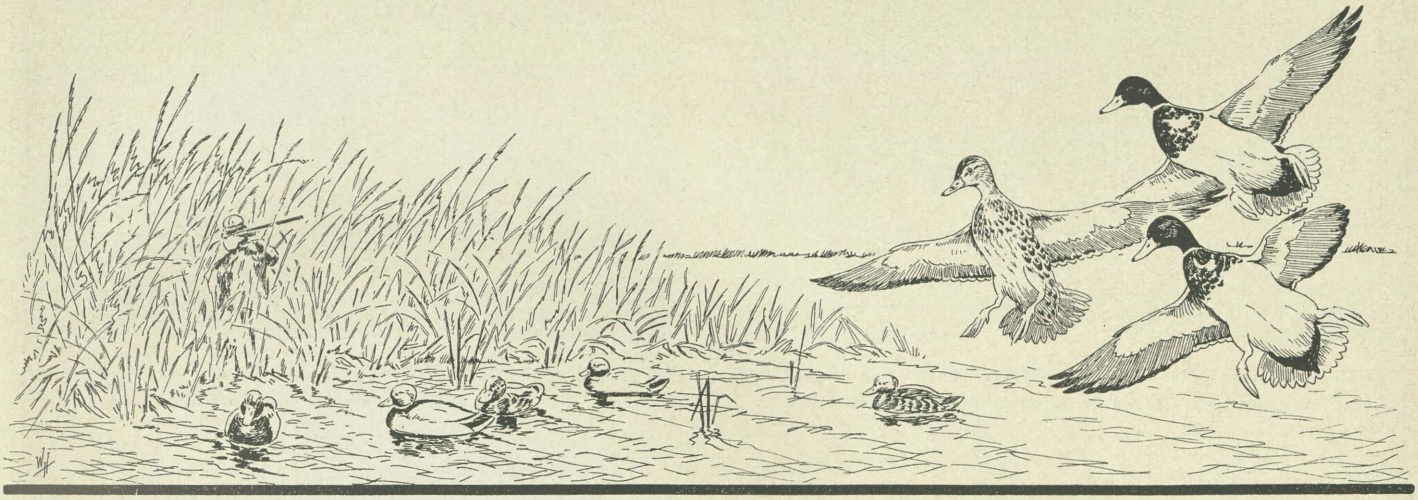


TUBE KNOT



DUCKS and DUNES

By
MORRIS H. SHAW

Photo By Bill Hansen
A summertime bathing beach may be an unusual place to hunt ducks but the hunter in the photo above proves the dunelands can be productive.

THERE WAS A FAINT SPLASH as the sinker and the shrimp-baited hook hit the surface of the Gulf somewhere out of sight in the swirling grayish white shroud of fog. Allowing a few seconds for the weight to carry the hook to the bottom, I tightened the line, stuck the butt of the rod into the sand spike and flopped down on the hard packed sand to puff disconsolately on a cigarette and mull over the situation.

Ordinarily an enthusiastic fisherman, my heart just was not in pursuits piscatorial this late November morning. Late November? According to the weather, this dawn could have passed for the opening of a balmy spring day—late spring, that is, after most of the ducks had pulled out for the north.

Now there is nothing wrong with surf fishing, in the right place and at the right time. But to a dyed in the wool waterfowl hunter, late November is the time when you sit in a duck blind, or wade the pot hole and marsh country, or drift a likely jump shooting river. Fishing is fine; good healthful, restful outdoor recreation. But what scattergunner gives a hoot for redfish, or trout, or flounders, or whiting when the frigid breath of old Jack Frost has the northern uplands flamed with brilliant colors and the webfooted legions come kiting down the airlanes toward the

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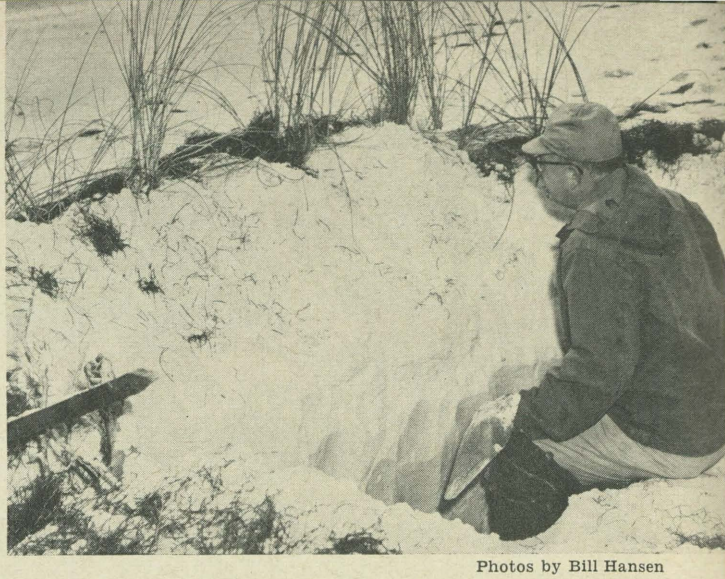
The shovel bites into the moist, packed sand with never so much as a sea shell to impede the progress of the excavation.



Photos by Bill Hansen

Trying out the sand bench to assure just the right height for a good view of the decoys and incoming birds.

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more compatible climes of the wintering grounds.

In the "Panhandle" country of northwest Florida, a couple of duck hunting cronies and I had passed many a hot summer and early fall evening in joyful anticipation of the scattergunning days ahead. The reports from the northern breeding grounds were good. With the passing of the months there would come a time when local Chamber of Commerce folks would long for jobs down the state in the "real" Florida, as they thumped radiators in metallic supplication to the janitor to turn up the heat. Then the frost killed cattails and marsh grass would bend and thrash, and the wide shallow bays and the deeper lakes would whitecap under the keen-edged, chilling blast of the north wind. Then the mallards, gadwalls, baldpates, pintails, teal, ringnecks and the rest would swing wide to eye the blocks and, with cupped wings, bore in toward the stool in front of the blind.

It was all very pleasant—the prospects for the coming season. Then, as the picture drew into ever sharper focus with the approach of the big day, the rosy bubble of expectancy turned into lead balloon reality. The weather had soured the situation. We should have seen it coming; three or four seasons of below normal rainfall had finally taken its toll. The jump shooting ponds and 'gator holes in the flatwoods were dry, the swampy margins and coves of once favorite lakes were reduced to boggy mudflats. Even the marsh at the mouth of the big river had suffered. With below normal flow of freshwater during the warm months, salt water had worked much further into the marsh than usual, killing many of the prime waterfowl food plant stands which had always held birds on the Apalachicola marshes.

There were birds around all right; Lake Talquin still held plenty of water, but one trip to this once favorite spot was enough. Local hunters concentrated by the dearth of even halfway promising quacker prospects were practically standing in ranks around the shore. At Iamonia it was the same, more hunters than ducks. Ditto for drought-shrunken Jackson. In three weeks of thumping elbows with other hunters, I had managed to scratch down one less than a day's bag limit of birds. Thus it was that I found myself in company with a disgruntled fellow waterfowler on the third weekend of the season, half-heartedly pitching shrimp into the waters off a summer time bathing beach far removed from the duck hunting haunts of previous seasons.

A trout (Deep South for weakfish), a small channel bass and three or four cigarettes later, I noticed Bill slogging up the beach toward me through the thinning fog. He dropped a pair of redfish beside my own catch and suggested that we hike up to the car for a morning snack.

We sat in the station wagon munching a couple of sandwiches and rehashing the miserable state of the duck hunting situation. My partner reached for the thermos jug of coffee and started pouring himself a cup. He paused with jug half raised and poked his head out of the car window. His mouth hung half open and a glazed look crept over his eyes. Just as I began to wonder if the duck dearth had shoved him off the deep end, I too caught the magical sound—the winnowing of wind through rapidly beating pinions.

I had heard that sound borne on the fall wind in many places, from the pot hole country of the Alaskan peninsula to the rice fields of the San Joaquin, from the Bear River marshes to the labyrinth of waterways along Florida's mangrove coast. It is the most wonderful music in the world to a hard-shell webfoot seeker. It is truly a symphony of fall, is this winnowing of wind through the rapidly beating pinions of a flock of fast flying ducks.

A few bluebill decoys placed so they ride the water just outside the surf line offers a tempting sight to trading ducks.

The freshly dug sand is frosted with a scattering of sea weed and, with a few sprigs of beach grass, makes the blind inconspicuous.

I fumbled open the door and scrambled out. Through a break in the cottony gray canopy we caught sight of a flock of scaup, the pearly gray under surface of their wings flashing the reflected light of early morning. The flock was hardly out of hearing when another bunch of birds passed overhead, followed by another, then yet others. Once in a while there drifted down to us a wild plaintive *whew whew whew,* the tri-note call of a male baldpate. There was occasionally the low mellow whistle of a pintail, the high-pitched staccato call of a greenwing, but mostly the fog-muted symphony consisted of the winnowing of unseen wings punctuated by an occasional purring *pbbr-pbbr* of the scaup.

We glanced at each other across the hood of the station wagon. Bill clipped out, "Let's go." I nodded my head in silent assent. We probed in the jumble of gear in the station wagon and extracted cased shotguns and shells brought along more in hope than in faith that anything resembling a duck would be forthcoming from this fishing tour to the summer playground.

The fog was thinning noticeably by this time as we split up and sought some sort of cover on the outer side of the billowing line of sand dunes which paralleled the shore. I was just getting settled behind a clump of beach rye grass when Bill's 16-gauge pump erupted three times in rapid succession. From a hundred yards down the beach the solid thump of a bird body on the hard packed sand was clear. It was followed seconds later by a splash in the water offshore and almost immediately by another shot. "Got two," Bill whooped. "Bluebills."

Under the rays of the climbing sun, the fog was burning off rapidly but even at that the flock of twenty or so hedge-hopping webfeet was almost on top of me before I saw them. The Winchester 12 swung up from behind the flock, the muzzle climbing up the ranks until the leader was blotted out of view. The blast rocked me off balance from my clumsy squatting position but the lead bird folded. His momentum carried him on a slant over the beach to thud down at the edge of the water with a satisfying *thwop.* The others seemed to follow him down until at the last moment they voloplaned upward, cut a short sizzling circle out over the water and came barreling back in tilting, rocketing flight. The ounce and a quarter charge of sixes punched a hole in the ether somewhere to the rear of that jet-propelled squadron of broadbills then they were out over the briny with the impenetrable armor of distance separating them from the bite of the 12-bore.

There was a slow down in the cross peninsula flight but it was only temporary. A half hour later the scaup began trading back and forth up and down the beach. We could see them, compact, bobbing knots of black and white scattered along the surf line close to shore with larger rafts gathered farther out in the Gulf. The rising sun had burned off the remnants of fog as Bill and I sat on a drift log talking over this latest turn of events.

For myself, I had always had a soft spot for the scaup, or bluebill as we used to call them back in my boyhood days on northern California's Humboldt Bay. Perhaps it is out of gratitude to the chunky salt water divers for innumerable before school hunts along Bull's Slough when many a bluebill dropped to the single barrel 20-gauge that was then my pride and joy. Or maybe it is the memory of the bags of the often none too brainy fowl that would swing readily into the crudely carved blocks I proudly called my bluebill stool. Be that as it may, I still figure the scaup as the focal point of some highly enjoyable sport to say nothing of some excellent eating.

We sat on the beach watching the scaup trading

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back and forth. There would be a small flock bobbing in the light surf close to shore or riding the gentle swell just beyond the surf. Suddenly a bunch of birds, six or eight, sometimes more, sometimes less, would take off and fly down the beach a few hundred yards to join another flock or perhaps they would swing out to land in with one of the main rafts off shore.

It did not require any brain-straining to see that here were some mighty good possibilities for a scaup gunning set up. There were some problems to be sure. For one thing, in this particular area, the closest dunes were back away from the water too far to offer anything in the way of concealment and still be within good shotgun range. Lifting a stunt from the open field goose shooters, we figured that a pit blind sunk above the normal high tide mark on the open, sloping beach offered the best possibility. Tied in with a small set of scaup blocks, if we could get them to ride properly just behind the surf line, sounded like a promising prospect, though definitely unorthodox, at least in this neck of the woods. The way the birds were trading back and forth, at least a few of the usually decoy-susceptible broadbills would certainly drop in to a set of phonies placed within shotgun reach of the pit.

Before dawn the next morning we were on the spot with shovel, decoys, and shotguns. This was more like it; this was fit activity for the predawn darkness of a November morning. Adding a good bit to the prospects, the weather had taken a turn for the better. A chill north wind was sweeping across the duneland, rattling the dried stems of the beach rye and bearing with it the scent of fall.

The shovel bit into the moist, packed sand with never so much as a sea shell to impede the progress of the excavation. I savored the ease with which we carved a "sit-down" pit, complete with bench and ample leg room. With satisfying smugness I remembered back to another November when a pick and shovel session of three hours had hardly been enough to scratch out a lay-down pit on a frost tempered gravelly ridge on a pass between a vast grain field and a broad, shallow eastern Oregon lake.

The first rosy tinge in the eastern sky saw Bill and I tossing out a dozen scaup decoys in the calm sheltered waters on the edge of the Gulf. Then over and around the freshly excavated sand of the pit we scattered a camouflaging frosting of dried sea weed gathered from the drift piles ricked on the beach by the early fall storms.

We settled down on the sand bench of the pit, smoked a cigarette, downed a cup of steaming hot coffee from the thermos and listened to the beach world come to life. From somewhere off in the half darkness there came the coarse complaining croak of a Great Blue Heron, answered by the gritty, higher pitched *squack* of a smaller relative, the Black-crowned Night Heron. Down from the velvety blue-black sky to the west drifted the faint rustle of wings and the sweetly plaintive whistling of sandpipers on the way to their morning feeding grounds.

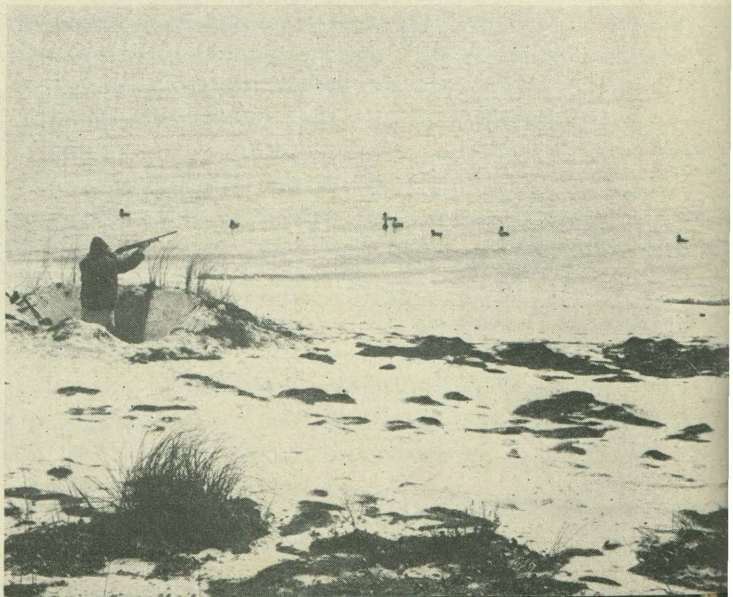
As we listened and watched the day unfold, both of us had in mind the big four-duck question, "Will they fly along the beach this morning or was the previous day's show a fluke, an unusual situation brought about by the fog or some other out of the ordinary factor?"

This morning the sky was mottled with rapidly scudding clouds. There was none of the fog that cut our visibility as on the previous morning. The decoys bobbing in the water, now ruffled lightly by the dawn wind from the east, were becoming more clearly discernible. I was just starting another idle census of the spread when from the pink-tinged gray white vault of sky to the north drifted the winnowing whistle in the cadence that spells quackers awing.

By the time we had the flock spotted they were directly overhead and already with cupped wings were dropping toward the open waters of the Gulf. So engrossed were we in watching the dim, strangely undulating flight of this first flock that a loud splashing

A little webfoot sweet talk will sometimes lure in a bird that is leary of the spread.

A roomy sand pit blind along the beach makes as comfortable a shooting stand as a hunter will find.



in the decoys was the first indication that a bunch of birds had slipped in from the opposite direction to land among the blocks. We sat motionless, conversing in low tones, each trying visually to separate the phonies from the flesh and blood webfeet. It was impossible from where we sat. The breeze and the tidal current imparted just enough motion to the decoys to give them a true to life movement.

"Straight out in front and right along the water," Bill muttered as he reached for his 16 resting in the crotch of a forked stick thrust in the wall of the pit. Six or seven scaup were boring straight in for the stool. "Let's take 'em," I breathed to Bill, slipping the safety off my pump gun. We jumped to our feet. The initial blasts from both guns blended into a single roar. The birds flared violently, back peddling in a frantic flurry of wings. I caught sight of the gleaming white underbelly of a male scaup, swung the muzzle ahead of him and eased off another shot. The charge of 6's sent him spinning to the surface beneath which he promptly dove.

The survivors of the flock were cleaving the ether well out of range by this time. "Three down," Bill announced. Just to the left of the decoys the cripple surfaced. Both of us threw a charge at the low swimming form. The shot lashed the water, the bird rolled over, waved a foot feebly a time or two and floated quietly, belly gleaming white against the dark water. We settled back in the blind to wait for the incoming tide to carry the birds ashore.

We had just started to climb out of the pit a few minutes later when a trio of scaup sizzled in from the bay side of the peninsula and dropped down toward the decoys with no show of hesitation. All three of them crumpled and splashed into the water under the two gun barrage. Even before we had finished picking up the seven birds, Bill, with a spectacular snap shot, pulled down a hooded merganser that came cutting at full tilt a few yards off the water and parellel with the beach.

"Short and sweet," he commented on the morning's hunt. "And surprising," I added in agreement. "Looks like we have been missing out on a good bet."

"Yeah, sure, but who in the heck ever thinks of going duck hunting along a bathing beach?" my partner quiried. "Besides, maybe we just happened to hit it right. How do wo know but what this is the only bathing beach in the whole country where this kind of thing will work."

"That's true," I had to admit, "But I know one way we can find out about this business."

"I'm with you," Bill stated. "You mean we'll have to put in plenty of time giving it the acid test. Right?"

"Right. And not only here but in as many other places as we can manage to reach."

And so we began a test; a scientific experiment we told our respective wives whenever they complained too loudly and too long over becoming duck season widows. Whenever one of us got the word that the birds were really in at Lake such-and-such, he would smile and nod absently at the intelligence. Our hunting time for the rest of the season was taken care of. We were not only having a whale of a good time but we were finding more good duck spots than we knew existed in our neck of the woods. Our ideas about what constitutes a good duck hunting location were undergoing some alterations, too.

When the season's bag was toted after closing day, the score was impressive in view of what we knew other hunters had managed. And there were a few surprises. The morning, for example, when a flock of Canada geese came beating out of the fog and left four of their number on the beach in front of our pit blind. Then there was the quiet afternoon when three blue geese, rare at best in our bailiwick, swung in over the stool and so surprised us that every one of them flew on unscathed. Nor did we down only scaup in the duck department for there were canvasbacks and red-

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A double on bluebills. Morris Shaw wades into the waters of the Gulf to retrieve a pair of ducks.

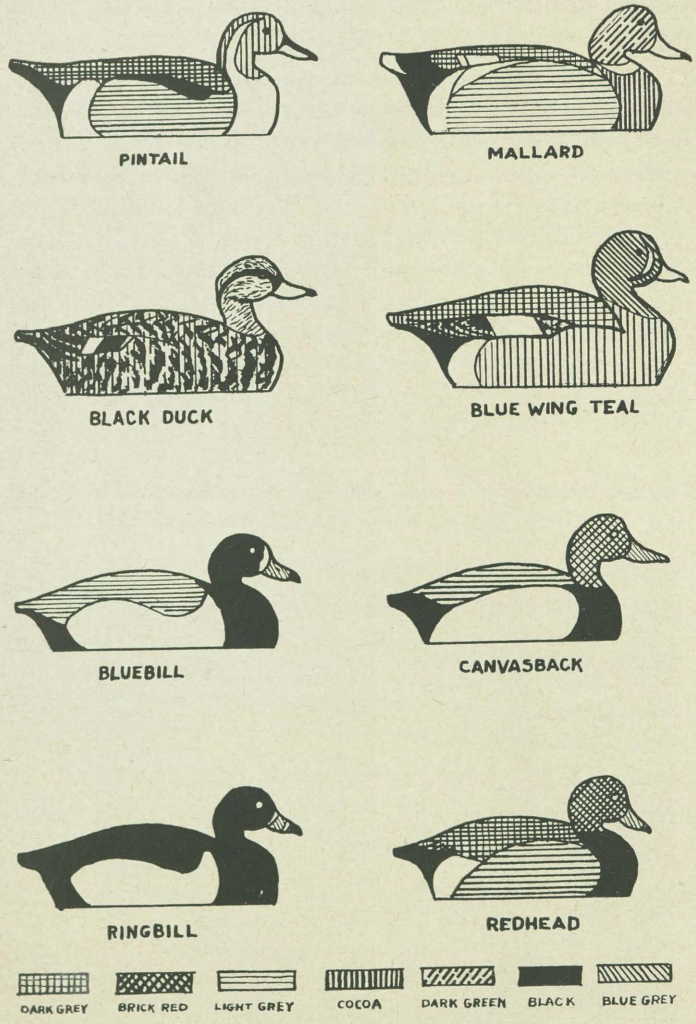
Photos by Bill Hansen

Back to the blind with three down and one to go. Next bird may come by in a minute or maybe not for an hour.

DUCK DECOYS

Their Repair and Maintenance

By
PAUL MacALESTER



TO BEGIN WITH, there's no such thing as a lukewarm duck hunter.

Invariably, he's fanatic on anything with a broad bill and webbed feet that whistles across the early morning sky like a homing jet. In short, the duck hunter is crazy about everything connected with the sport. He has to be — who else will stand and freeze in wintry swamp or lake water for hours on end for a half-dozen shots?

Perhaps one of the finest aspects of the duck hunting scene is the business of luring them in with decoys. There's nothing which gives a greater thrill than the sight of ducks cupping into a well-placed spread of blocks.

The care and grooming of decoys and a slow assembling of a thoughtfully-chosen collection of these duck-foolers can be a source of continuing joy to the waterfowl hunter. Many think of decoy care as a thankless chore. But many's the long evening that's been whiled away — fitting out the blocks for the coming season and reminiscing about the last good shoot over them.

When the weather's wet, cold and gusty (it even gets that way in Florida now and then) the decoys really come into their own. Restless bluebills, redheads, mallards and canvasbacks roam the marshes, looking for a snug haven. A well-kept stool of decoys can bring them in — panting for company.

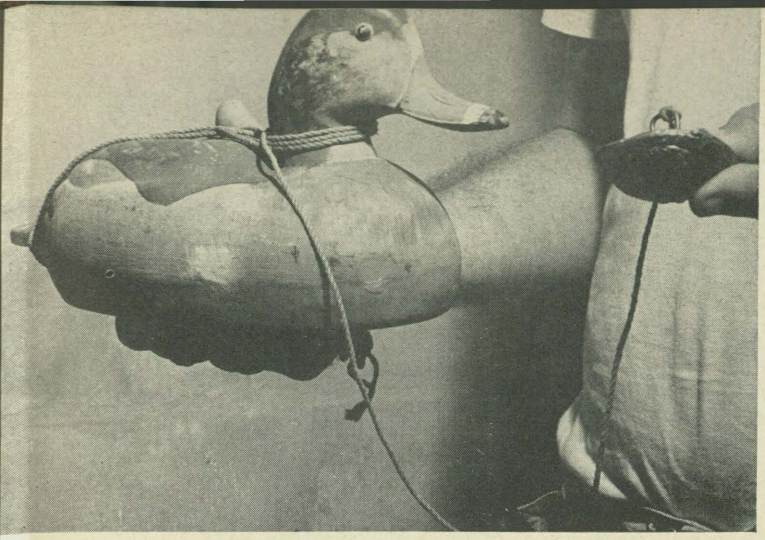
To begin with — what should the wildfowler look for in a decoy? If he's like the writer, he wants the most for his money, with a minimum amount of upkeep worries. For my money that's the hollow plastic block. Two of the finest lines in this category come from Herter's and Victor. Prices start as low as $17 a dozen.

There are less expensive, papier mache hollow decoys, which are a few cents cheaper — but the hunter is constantly faced with the worry of waterlogging and shot damage. A well-constructed hollow plastic decoy can take an amazing amout of pellets and at close range without any drastic damage.

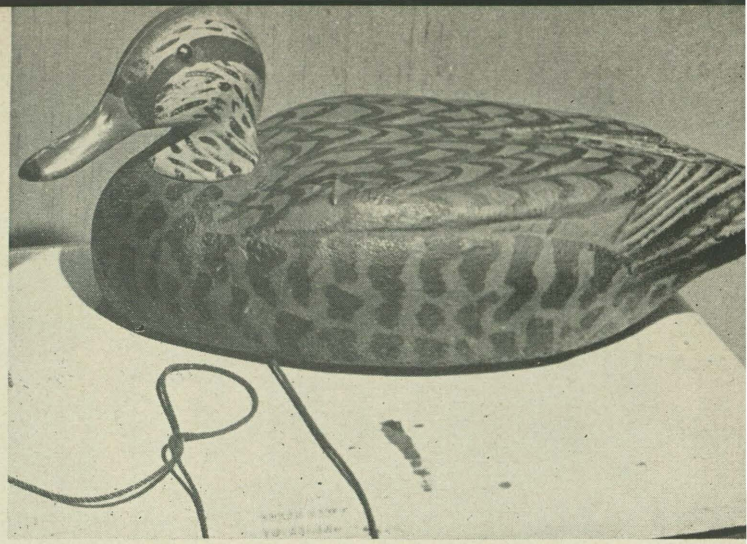
And the better plastic models are real scale replicas of the birds they imitate — unlike some of the bulkier, cheaper models. In fact, the better grade plastic decoys even have feather detail moulded into them. At least one model I know of has a moulded-in, weighted keel. You can chuck these babies into the water as far as you can heave them, and they'll always come right side up.

The beginner should give thought too, to the division of sexes in his decoy spread. Many old-time gunners lean a little toward an overbalance of hens. The brilliant-colored drakes are unmistakable in their various species, but there are many female species of a uniform drab brown color, which will mix better and serve a wider variety of uses.

The mark of a rank beginner usually is a gorgeous assortment of brilliantly-plumed drakes — divers and puddlers all mixed together.



Decoy ground tackle. This plastic hen ringbill decoy is all set to go, equipped with a length of hefty cotton fishing twine and the good-sized mushroom-type anchor at right. Decoy line is wrapped around the neck and under the tail in a figure "8" for ease of storage and handling.



Black duck pattern. This "store-boughten" lightweight solid plastic decoy sports a hand-painted plumage pattern which is a decided improvement over the more indistinct factory paint job. One of the outstanding features of the Black's color pattern is the broad black eye stripe.

If the terrain permits, divers should be grouped separately in deeper water, with the puddlers (Mallards, Pintails, etc.) in shallow water. At any rate, it's usually better to keep the two types separated as far as possible. Get to know the duck which winter in your favorite shooting preserve and match your decoys (at least in the class-category) with the ducks you find there. Nothing screams "fake" worse than a spread of canvasbacks in waters used only by the puddlers.

Try to place the decoys with the wind at your back, so that ducks cupping in upwind will be in your face. And keep the decoys within the effective range of your shotgun.

So much for buying and using. If you've already got a fair-sized decoy collection, there's always maintenance work to be done. To the man who really loves and enjoys his decoys, there's nothing more appalling than a raft of scabrous, paint-chipped blocks. Painting the decoys is an art all its own. Avoid glossy paint like the plague — real ducks just don't shine — and they "don't go with the boys who do".

This business of glare poses a real problem. Most waterproof paints have a high gloss and they're highly expensive.

You can buy ready-mixed decoy colors — but there are several hitches. To get small-sized bottles, you usually have to buy a large set with colors which will never find their way onto a decoy. In choosing just the colors you want, it usually works out that you are stuck with the large "economy-size" cans.

To get around this, the writer experimented for some time with garden-variety paint ingredients. The best mixture found so far consists of good linseed oil as a base, enough white oil color to make opaque, followed with oil colors matching the decoy color pattern.

You can mix up these batches in whatever amounts you need. I keep mine in old instant coffee jars of various sizes.

There's one other important ingredient which goes into the paint mixture — gloss killer. Most of the bigger paint firms put out these gloss "flatteners". It's usually in the form of a thick syrup or paste.

Of course, all of this activity is going to call for a tremendous amount of stirring. It's more than I'd like to do by hand. Most everyone owns an electric drill these days. For a couple of bucks it can be converted into an A-1 paint mixer. The main thing needed is a rheostat foot-feed used on portable sewing machines. Most sewing machine service stores carry them. The trick is take a fairly short length of extension cord and cut the foot-feed into either of the two wire strands. Hook the rig up and press the drill switch and you're in busines. With pressure on the foot feed, you can stir as fast or as slow as you like, without covering the garage interior and yourself. The accompanying diagram shows the layout in simplified form.

Now you've got the decoys and the paint. Most of the decoy's factory-sprayed color patterns are to indistinct for my liking. One of the finest ways of getting just the right effect is to visit a nearby park pond where a few wild ducks may spend the season. Some of the color patterns with this article took form on a sketchboard on the edge of such a pond.

Pay attention to bill colors too. Blue-grey bills belong on canvasbacks, pintails, redheads, bluebills, ringbills (ringnecks), and tea.

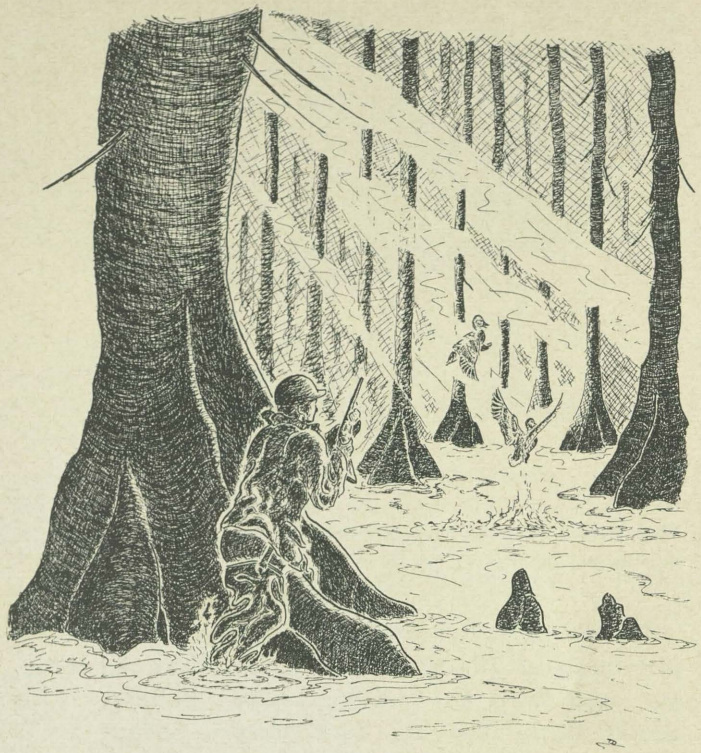
Orange bills for greenhead mallard drakes, and yellow ones for greenhead hens, black mallards and black ducks. Appearance of bills can be improved with a coat of semi-gloss or "rubbed finish" varnish.

So much for painting. Now for the "ground tackle".

Everyone has his own formula for this, but the best I've found is a six or seven-foot length of heavy cotton fishing cord (dark green). This is a good length for hunting on lake or river marshes, but should be in-

(Continued on Page 37)

DIFFICULT



Cypress trees and Spanish moss provide difficult duck shooting. You may see only two or three ducks in as many days. Then again there may be several flocks. Success depends upon fast gun handling.

HOW MANY FLORIDA hunters take home a brace of fat mallards, or even teal, regularly?

When the flatbills flock down in droves, when there are plentiful food and surface water, and when you have access to a choice shooting area, you might expect to enjoy roast duck with wild rice frequently.

Often, however, successful duck shooting becomes a tough combination of sleuthing, patience, and doggedness. Ducks are not always plentiful in the best of areas. Neither are they always easily found. And after a baptism of express load 5's to 7½'s during the early part of the season, all ducks become cagey. Yet with a little painstaking effort you can bag these "difficult" ducks.

Any water hole well camouflaged by weed grown edges may be an unknown haven for waterfowl, overlooked by the casual hunter. A few years ago I located a 3-acre pond which had in years past been lauded as a perfect spot for ducks. That first afternoon I watched two flocks of greenheads whistle over—two hundred yards high—and settle down below the horizon. The incident was repeated the second day. I saw the flocks circle a half mile away and drop down beyond my line of vision. The third day I trudged over the open fields and stumbled suddenly upon two potholes, each no larger than my living room! I hastily stacked several bushes together. An hour before sunset I was literally covered with mallards! I enjoyed duck-and-beans for two weeks before the birds became wise.

Duck hunters of the open waters don't often realize small marshes and swamps may afford excellent shooting. Not long ago an acquaintance told me he had traveled four hundred miles to shoot his small limit of ducks. I didn't tell him I was bringing home a couple of ducks daily from a 10-acre marsh twenty miles away.

Plan your approach well when going after those shrewd webfeet. And don't let unexpected events discourage you. There was the time a friend and I scouted a big lake before the season. We found an inlet that attracted a flock of bluebills. We kept a daily register of ducks and hours they flew into the inlet. By studying an aerial photomap, we picked out a trail leading to a natural blind of alders within shooting distance of the ducks. We measured the distance from the map and figured the travel time. We sneaked down the path before noon opening day and waited. At the time the ducks were due, an outboard motor sputtered in the distance. A fishing boat nosed into the inlet when the first scaup flew over. We had no choice but to leave. A cold windy spell swept in during the night, fortunately, keeping anglers at home the following morning. Our planning finally paid off!

When shooting occasional ducks that frequent small ponds, follow one of two methods—either wait for the ducks to come to you or else go after them. If you intend to wait, build a rough but concealing bank blind. Decoys work well, but don't use a caller unless you know how.

On one trip in the West I visited a quarter-acre prairie tank, a favorite of waterfowl for miles since it was the only body of water they could land on. The banks were bare of shrubbery and a duck shooter could be spotted a mile away by any quacker with astigmatism. Ducks flew over frequently, but just to confirm their suspicions. They saw me squatting there like a wart on the shoulder of a bathing beauty and remained out of range of my high velocity 12-gauge 6's.

There was no blind. The only vegetation was the thin dry stalks of ankle-high weeds. For two hours I pulled those weeds and piled them in a waist high heap. I then squirmed under the teetering mass feet first until I was hidden from view. A few moments later I heard the *swish* of wings as a pair of greenheads circled and splashed water. I leaped to one knee and dropped a drake about six feet above the water. I again remade my precious blind and bored beneath it. Within the hour I had the limit. A farmer in the

DUCKS

By EARL KENNAMER

vicinity nearly swallowed his pipe when he saw my kill. "Why, nobody's shot that many ducks before in one day over that tank! What's your secret?" I told him luck had something to do with it and hurried away before he could bleed any factual information from me. That pond paid off several more times that season.

The other method of taking a few ducks from a small pond is to "jump" them. During World War II I was stationed on a military reservation on which there were a half dozen small watering ponds receptive to ducks. I worked out concealed routes to each pond. This simplified my hunting technique. I parked my car a hundred yards away from a dam, crawled on hands and knees to it, stood erect, and picked off at least one startled duck as the flock burst from the water. Retrieving my kill, I simply drove to the next pond.

There are two good methods of stream shooting ducks. If the stream is wide but has some depth and a good current, get a sound boat that floats high. Decorate the boat profusely with brush. Start paddling at daybreak. When you spot a raft of ducks in the distance, lie flat on the boat bottom until you drift within gun range.

If the stream is small and not navigable, I usually ferret out the choice hangouts of ducks before the season by reconnoitering the banks and sloughs for several miles. Whenever I kick up ducks from a pool, I scout the area thoroughly. In some cases I rehearse the attack. On the next trip I drop to my knees several yards from the stream and crawl belly-flat to the bank. If the ducks are there, I'm ready for them when they break water.

Wooded marsh shooting is the toughest method of taking waterfowl. You'll have to ambush rising fowl or else work your way into the depths of the swamp and wait for them. While you may find many duck species in a swamp, the "squealer," or wood duck, and the black duck may be the most frequent. And these to me are the wildest and wariest of all ducks. Two years ago I spotted a few squealers ten feet from the edge of a cypress swamp shoreline. I inched along with my nose scraping the wet frozen ground until I was within range. Even then I missed because my hands were numbed beyond feeling. And all this trouble for one duck—the legal bag limit!

In one swamp I hunted, the only way I could outwit ducks was to get into the heart of the morass and

Ted Dillon

My favorite shooting position in the deep swamp was a fallen tree. I would lie motionless, let the unsuspecting ducks paddle by within deadly range, and then knock 'em down.

wait patiently for them. I always entered before daylight and slogged my way through damp fog, rafts of rotting logs, and treacherous cypress knees. My stand was generally a large fallen log. In this seige style of hunting you might as well get comfortable because ducks may not come in for hours, if at all. One sunshiny day I dozed and rolled off a log into knee-deep icebox tempered water. On another occasion I really made a blunder. As I awakened groggily from my midmorning snooze, I saw two blackjacks cavorting about like foxes in a henyard. I groped feverishly for my doublebarrel. By the time I found it, the ducks had bolted. I blasted two holes through Spanish moss, anyway. As the second shot boomed out, a clamor of beating wings burst around me. I had been surrounded by ducks. And just when the best targets were available, I sat there foolishly with an empty smoking gun!

Difficult ducks definitely test the skill of any waterfowler. They are more sporting game than the general run of waterfowl. Every bird bagged is a true trophy. Then there was the evening I proudly flipped two ducks on the kitchen table.

"My!" exclaimed the good woman. "You even picked them!"

"Yep," I said as I discreetly wadded two foil bands bearing the inscription, *Kinsing Poultry Farms* into a ball and sneaked it into the garbage pail.

Sometimes you may have to be a bit unethical. ●

The Greer victory grin. The ducks displayed by the USF&WS man are but a portion of the party's total day's bag.

The decoys were old and hand made, but they were the main attraction for many of Cape Canaveral's

8,000 REDHEADS

By GEORGE X. SAND

OVERHEAD THE LEADEN, rain-stung sky had suddenly filled with ducks again . . . hundreds of them . . . that sent me crouching even lower into the uncomfortably wet grass of my camera blind. I could hear the soft gabbling that came from almost a thousand wild throats as the flailing wings hung there momentarily against the gray overcast . . . thick as a cloud of mosquitoes . . . uncertain whether to pause here at our small pond with its comparatively few decoys, or beat their way farther inland in the face of the rising norther.

Even as I watched with pounding heart and squinting eyes a new aerial armada joined the first big milling group overhead . . . adding to the confused congestion as the newcomers tipped and turned, balancing precariously on the gusty air currents.

"Glory, it just can't be—" I muttered foolishly through suddenly stiff lips. "There just aren't big flocks like that left any more . . . particularly not down here in Florida." Not since my boyhood when I used to hunt excitedly from sneak-boats on the eelgrass-abundant flats of New Jersey's broad Barnegat Bay had I heard this great fluttering sigh of disturbed air close overhead that can come only from hundreds of simultaneously descending wildfowl.

The leaders had made up their minds. With stiff pinions they were slanting their followers down to the protected surface of our tiny pond—and disaster.

About a hundred yards to my left, where Dick Macomber and the three others in our party now likewise crouched inside carefully built blinds, a gun suddenly went off. Instantly, it was joined by others.

The faint *pop-pop* sounds—barely audible above the ever-rising rush of the biting north wind—were getting results. I saw a plump drake leap upward with frantically beating wings . . . once . . . followed each time by a fresh probing charge of 7½ chilled . . . until suddenly he crumpled and slumped lifeless to the brown marsh below.

A sleek brown and white hen, twisting and dodging with what seemed to be the suddenly unleashed power of a runaway jet at the nearby Cocoa Guided Missile Base, easily eluded several futile salvos and zipped so low over my blind—less than a yard above my head—that I heard clearly her startled cry and met the full impact of her angry, round-eyed stare as she flashed past to safety.

The poppings had ceased as suddenly as they began. Hunting-jacketed men were standing up, stretching cramped leg muscles. There came the faint acrid smell of gunpowder on the storm's breath and Macomber's husky black retriever could be seen leaping eagerly

from the grassy bank beside the blinds to fetch the crumpled feathered forms that now were being blown rapidly away downwind, white bellies up.

"You know what those ducks were?" Billy Greer called across the wind-tossed gray water to me. "Those were *redheads!*"

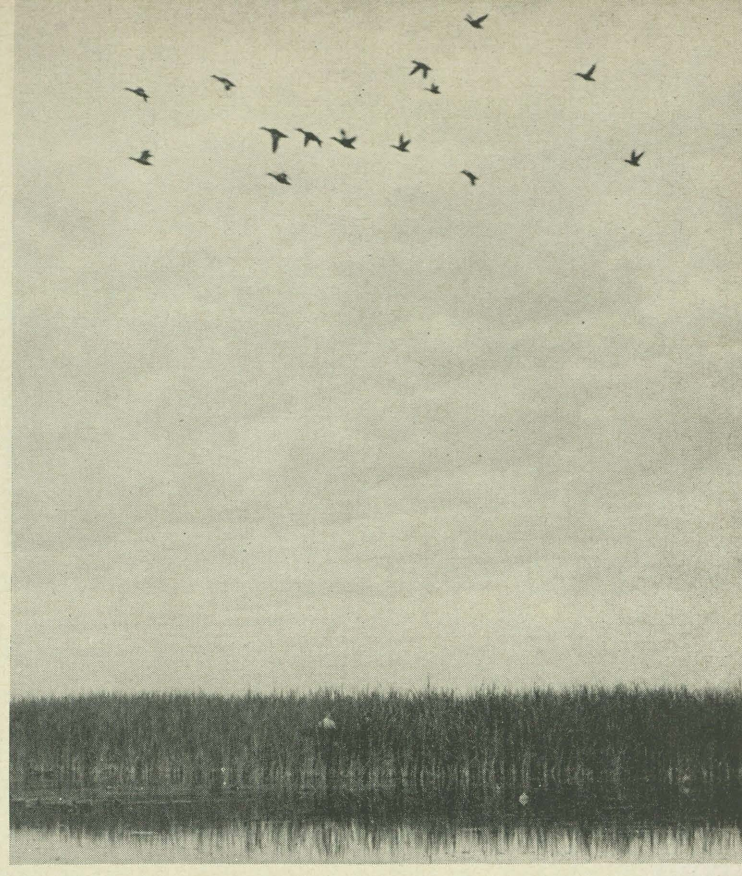
I'd thought they must be scaup and had mistakenly identified the great twinkling black and white flight thus when it first hove into view over the misty and wave-lashed horizon of the nearby Atlantic. My confusion was understandable: I hadn't seen redheads in such tremendous numbers in over 30 years.

We were hunting on Merritt Island, near Titusville, on the Florida lower east coast and within sight of heavily congested U. S. Highway No. 1. Many of those who were traveling the busy highway this Christmas season would have been startled to learn that they were hurrying past some of the very best duck shooting to be had in America. Between 100,000 and 200,000 wildfowl winter each season on the island's beautiful marshes and the adjacent Mosquito Lagoon-Indian River waters. Here, at this southern terminus, one encounters just about every species that barrels up and down the Atlantic Flyway.

Greer and a companion, Don Montgomery, were both members of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as was at that time, too, our host Dick Macomber. Greer and Montgomery had come up from Miami while Joe Reese and I had driven up from the Fort Lauderdale area, all of us meeting at Dick's home in Vero Beach. From there we'd launched forth happily into a "five-day weekend" type of combined fishing-snipe shooting-duck hunting safari that was to produce results so incredible that one would normally expect to read of such outlandish things in a chamber of commerce brochure.

Macomber had put in several years work in this area as field supervisor of River Basin Studies for the Vero office of the USF&WS. As a result of this he knew the region well. "We'll kick-off the party by going after bluefish and sea trout at Sebastian inlet," he'd told us. "After that we'll head for Fellsmere and the back country where the St. Johns River rises. I think I can show you guys more and bigger snipe back in there than you ever dreamed existed. Then we'll wind up by catching 'gator trout and shooting ducks in the Mosquito Lagoon-Merritt Island area."

The inlet fishing had proven all one could ask for, and more. We'd been joined in this sport by Rivers Anderson and Karl Osborne of Vero, the latter being the fishing editor of the VERO BEACH PRESS JOURNAL. Anderson and Osborne had fished from the slippery rock jetty, catching such bonus species as pompano and channel bass, while the rest of us drifted our shrimp-baited or artificial lures back with the current from two skiffs anchored in the inlet's mouth.



A flock of ducks swings in over the decoys for a careful look before dropping in.

There were about twenty-five other boats in addition to ours and we watched these fishermen pull in trout, mostly two and three-pounders, until—like us—their arms grew tired. Joe, Dick, Don and I released over a hundred such fish between us.

The limit on the snipe was eight apiece—and I shot at least that many holes into the air with my new over-and-under Browning 12 gauge before I managed to correct the lead and bring down one of these erratic fliers that seem to jump up from out of nowhere and disappear again almost as quickly with a squeaky, derisive cry. These were Wilson's or jack-snipe and it may have been that I was hesitating too long in aiming, for it is easy to confuse them with other non-game birds. Shortly, however, I learned to look for the long bill (which hangs down at an angle during flight, much like the woodcock) and to accurately identify the peculiar wing beat.

"Now that you've become an expert we'll go to a place where it's just a little more sporting to hunt 'em," Dick Macomber announced, winking significantly at the other party members. "In this place the grass grows higher than your head—which means fast shooting."

I groaned silently at the thought of what a move to a new locale would mean back here in this sweeping wilderness marsh where no two waterways seemed willing to join ranks. We'd followed a very poor "road"

(Continued on Next Page)

Author, left, carries back to boats portion of homemade "Yankee" decoys whose high white sides, visible for miles, were credited by others for bringing in huge flocks of shelter-seeking ducks.

(Continued from Preceding Page)

out here, one that paralleled a drainage canal somewhere west of Wabasso and Fellsmere. We'd bounced over a badly rutted and cratered grade with our trailered boat following protestingly behind, until even this had petered out. Whereupon the five of us had lifted bodily the 16-foot Aluma Craft hull to carry it off in search of the nearest water—no mean trick, particularly since an 18-horsepower outboard happened to be hanging at the stern. When the water had suddenly given out we'd had no choice but to portage over a high canal bank and find new water ...

"Don't look so glum," chided Joe Reese, reading my thoughts. "This could go on all day, sure, but think of the snipe shooting fun we're having!"

"Sure, that's probably why it's so good," Bob Montgomery added with a chuckle. "Nobody else is crazy enough to tackle this paradise of Macomber's!"

This time, after a somewhat longer cruise through the slumbering, majestic golden savanna, whose dozens of sweet water sources secretely combine to start the mighty St. Johns on its way, we moored the aluminum boat close to a big section of marsh that was thickly grown with tall reeds and weeds. Hardly had we stepped onto the muddy bank when several big snipe exploded upward and zoomed off.

Dick pointed approvingly to the moist earth at our feet. "Good bottom here—you can see where they were feeding," he said, indicating with one rubber booted toe the telltale small holes left in the mud by the long bills. "They like to probe for the tiny worms, crawfishes, insects and other natural foods that are found in marshes like this."

The snap shooting here proved to be every bit as fast and furious as had been predicted—almost *too* fast for me—but when it ended every man had his limit of these *Gallinago delicata.* When it ended, too, every man present found himself facing the unpleasant prospect of the long and hard backtrail through the vast marsh. For the last gun had been fired barely in time to meet the legal curfew at sunset—and now the rapidly settling twilight warned that darkness would soon be overtaking us.

Yet there was obviously no question that everyone present would gladly have done it all over again for such snipe shooting as we'd enjoyed.

And now, well before dawn on the morning of the last day, we'd launched a couple of skiffs alongside the causeway that runs eastward from Titusville across the broad Indian River toward Wilson and Orsino on Merritt Islands. It was raining and blustery cold—fine duck hunting weather—but rather hard on the nerves when the tossing night is pitch black and you are left with no alternative but to race at full throttle across several miles of tricky shoals in order to keep up with the lead boat, hoping all the while that should it run aground you will somehow sense this and manage to stop in time—without smashing it to smithereens. Reese and I had only the intermittent gleam of a flashlight from the others in their 35 horsepower skiff somewhere in the swirling night beyond our bow. How Dick Macomber managed to pilot us unerringly through that inky wet void I'll never know.

When we reached it the island loomed low against the churning water like a vague, mysterious mass; an uncertain black outline against the already dark night. "Every man take one of the decoy bags—divide up the load," Macomber whispered hurriedly as we secured the skiffs. "We've got a bit of walking ahead of us and it'll be getting light soon..."

A restless wind rustled through the marsh grass and scrub elder bushes as we moved quickly away through the rainy night; a procession of silent forms in single file, with ears attuned sharply to each new startled *squawk* of disturbed night birds and minds busy with the promise of what lay ahead. Merritt Island, I knew, was still platted into thousands of lots from the Florida boom and crash era of the 20s. I muttered a silent prayer of thanksgiving now that the land boomers had never managed to complete their selfish work of carving the place up.

We came to a pond and the surrounding brush seemed to crash noisily—too noisily—as we pushed carefully through it until we could make out the faintly starlit water. Dark forms jumped up suddenly from the surface and above the wind we could hear the *whee-whee-whee* of rapidly departing wings.

Hardly had we got the decoys out when the first rainbow-hued colors of a new day came stealing toward us from behind dark clouds that remained banked

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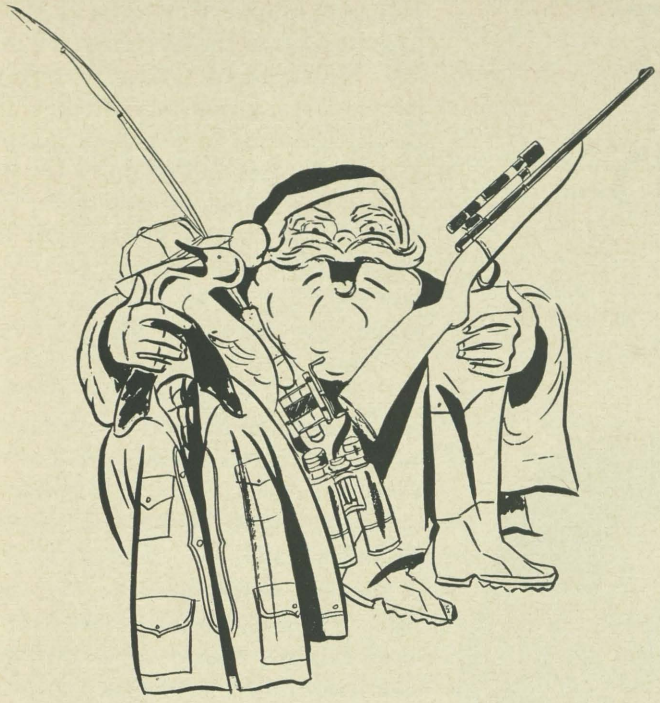

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THEY'VE GOT TO BE GOOD

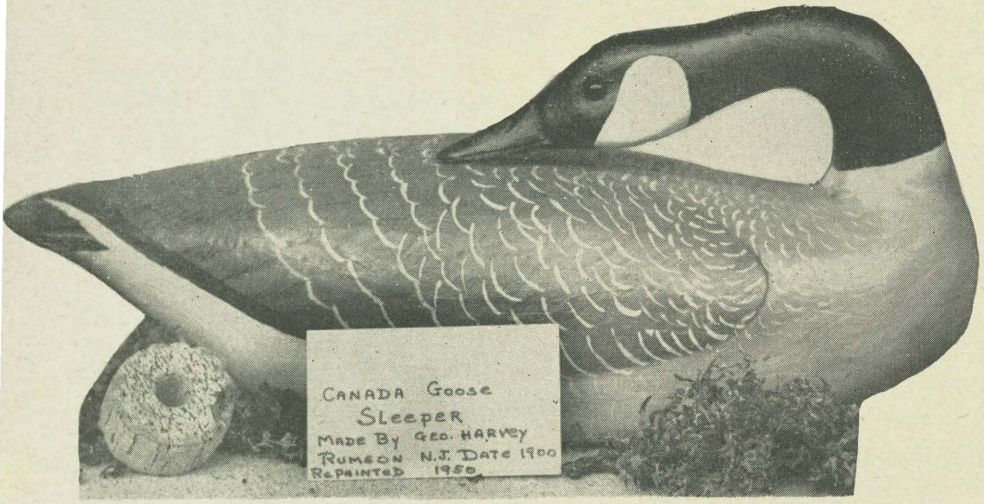
By ED LEMACK

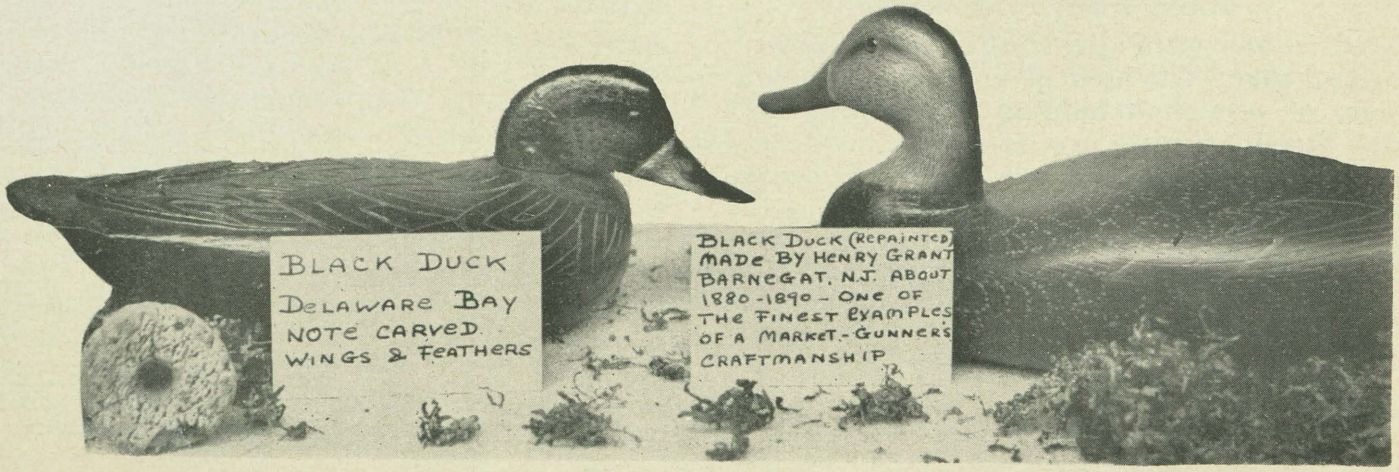
Last hunting season a Florida duck hunter, concealed in a salt marsh blind in the St. Mark's Wildlife Management Area, carefully manipulated electrical switches remotely controlling the performance of a mechanical, but feather-covered, duck decoy riding an open water expanse some twenty yards from his blind. The single decoy had cost him $40. During his hunting day he killed one duck for his combined investment of money and effort.

Less than a quarter of a mile away, another hunter, using homemade and battered, but serviceable, decoys handed down in his family from the time of his grandfather took his limit.

Beyond doubt, good decoys, contribute greatly to successful waterfowl hunting today. Of course, you can shoot ducks by the pass shooting and jump shooting methods, but shooting over decoys is perhaps the best technique — and holds the greatest appeal — for the average gunner. But the decoys have got to be good!

Highly prized are waterfowl de-





coys which are so natural in appearance and performance that passing birds decoy to them readily and without suspicion. Among these top decoy performers are remaining homemade decoys of other generations.

In their day, quite a number of the old-time decoy makers became famous as wood sculptors, and where their few remaining creations no longer see active service, the decoys are now highly valued as collectors' items. Among the more prominent decoy makers were "Shang" Wheeler, of Connecticut; Nathan Cobb, of Virginia; Lem Ward, of Maryland; Elmer Crowell, of Massachusetts, and George Harvey, Henry Grant and Harry Schourdes, of New Jersey.

Here in Florida, Richard Moeller, 2817-7th Avenue, West, Bradenton, owns about 40 to 50 of the finest examples of old-time, handmade decoys and is widely recognized as an authority on the subject.

Until recently, Mr. Moeller had approximately 400 decoys, all of them handmade and some more than a century old. But before coming to Florida to live, he gave most of his collection to the Shelbourne, Vermont, museum, retaining for his Florida home only some of the oldest and most exquisitely carved models. These are given frequent free exhibition at Bradenton and other Florida points as part of wood sculpturing and art education exhibits.

With today's decoy's being primarily machinemade from wood, plastic, papier-mache and rubber materials, the making of delicately hand-carved decoys is a lost art, Moeller says.

As frequently happens, the collecting urge hit Moeller rather suddenly. Twenty years ago, Moeller possessed only two duck decoys, a black and a mallard, given him by an uncle and subsequently placed on the hearth of his fireplace as ornaments. Then one day, Bill Mackey, a visiting friend, saw the decoys and suggested additions.

Within a week the two were touring the coast of New Jersey, and especially scouring the shacks along the waterfront of Barnegat Bay for examples of a fast-disappearing art. Moeller and Mackey purchased entire rigs — decoys, guns and shotgun shell reloading equipment — mostly from old market hunters and guides too aged to withstand the ruggedness of late Fall and Winter gunning.

Their searched territory was expanded to include Virginia and North Carolina, then Maryland, Long Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Each week the two collectors returned with a car full of the oddest assortment of decoys imaginable — swan, geese, heron, brant and all the duck species that migrate along the Atlantic flyway.

Most common of located old-time decoys was the broadbill, followed by replicas of the redhead and black duck, the mallard, canvasback, golden eye, pintail, widgeon, bufflehead, old squaw and ruddy duck. Most difficult to find were decoys representing blue

A U. S. Fish & Wildlife official examines some of the illegal weapons confiscated from market hunters. The big guns, or their multi-barrelled companions, were usually mounted low in the bow of small skiff and fired by hunters stretched flat behind them. Recoil must have been body-jolting.

and green-winged teal, merganser, eider and scoter — and most rare of all, a seagull decoy.

As Moeller recalls from his own hunting of waterfowl, and as many of FLORIDA WILDLIFE's duck-hunting readers will likely remember from their experiences, seagulls invariably come in to swim around close to concentrations of ducks or decoys set for them. For this reason, the old-timers would put out several gull decoys to give a more natural aspect to arranged rigs. Although seagull decoys are practically unknown today, their use is still a good idea, duck hunters will find. The problem is to locate a wood sculptor who can make you some of truly natural appearance and floating action.

Slaughter of waterfowl in the old days was unregulated and terrific. In the Chesapeake Bay area alone, an estimated 15,000 birds per day were killed by professional market hunters, who used every known and conceivable means to accomplish their objectives. Many professional hunters disdained to count their daily bags of such abundant species as mallards, redheads and canvasbacks and, instead, sold them by the wagon-load.

In Joel Barber's book, "Wild Fowl Decoys", there is a reference to the killing within a single day by one man of more ducks than many modern hunters kill in a lifetime... "It happened right here on the flats

(Continued on Next Page)

Richard Moeller, of Bradenton, owns 40 to 50 of the finest examples of old-time handmade decoys, some more than a century old. A collector, he at one time had many more, but gave 400 to the Shelbourne, Vermont, museum before he moved to Florida.

(Continued from Preceding Page)

of Harve de Grace on the Opening day of the season of 1879. On that day William Dobson killed more than 500 ducks. He started out as usual shooting two guns, both breechloading doubles of 10 gauge, but during the early hours of the morning one gun burst and was thrown overboard."

Moeller says he has authentic records in his collection of waterfowl hunting history that show the daily bag of a market hunter averaged 200 ducks, or more. Moeller says an aged market hunter in Manahawkin, New Jersey, showed him an old ledger in which his waterfowl kills shipped to the Philadelphia market were recorded. One item recorded 278 yellowlegs shot in one day by one man. At the time, broadheads brought 25¢ a pair, while canvasback kills sold for a little more. The tales Moeller has heard first-hand of unregulated market hunting and personal experiences of the old guides, market hunters and decoy-makers would fill a book.

Practically all of the old market hunters loaded their own shells, and in many cases made their own shot and decoys.

As Moeller's contemporary, Ralf Coykendall, an avid duck hunter points out, ducks can be divided into two basic groups — the diving ducks and the shoal-water ducks. The diving ducks have body outlines that appear high forward and low aft, and the shoal-water species are low forward and high aft. Coykendall emphasizes that duck decoys, like the birds they are intended to lure, should have the same visible characteristics. Moeller agrees.

Also important in a good waterfowl decoy is duplication of natural postures. A sleeping or semi-sleeping position of the head and neck, and a normally relaxed poise, are undoubtedly best. An upright neck means alertness and will usually frighten away any birds about to stool. Most decoys, as made by men who know ducks, are shaped to appear relaxed in posture.

However, ideas about the proper size of decoys used, and how they should be painted, vary widely. Some of today's decoy-makers are favoring oversize decoys, about twice as large as the actual fowl itself and others exaggerate the colors — adding more white to the sides of scaup decoys, for example, to attract ducks in flight more readily. Moeller, who has had a chance to examine and test both old and modern decoys, says that he personally prefers oversize decoys painted as natural as possible with glintless paints so that they do not shine when wet.

Moeller, a gifted conversationalist, interestingly explains the history of decoys and their making, a native American art that dates back hundreds of years. He says, "the American Indian first conceived the idea of making a lure which would attract waterfowl and cause them to light on the water close enough to a hunter to be killed with a primitive bow and arrow.

"Our first known American decoy was of reeds and grass, painted with crude colors made from roots and berries. Feathers were added to make the decoys more realistic, and created decoys were anchored near pond or lake bank with stone anchors, with the ready hunter patiently waiting close by.

"From these early days of the use of decoys to the present time, succeeding generations of wildfowlers have sought to create improved and more effective decoys, and many types of materials and methods were used in making the so-called blocks.

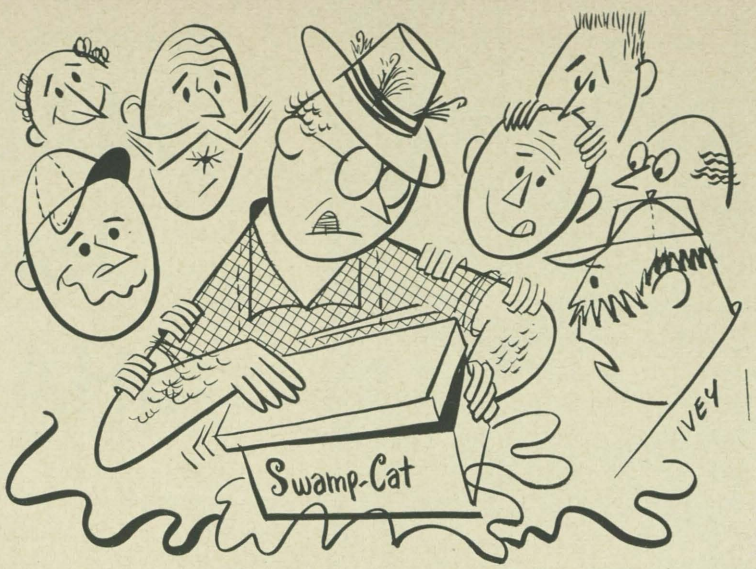
"The early makers' products were hewn from solid wood and were crude at best. Some makers, however, used naturally shaped and bent roots for decoy necks and heads; hence the name — roothead decoy. The most common wood used was cedar and the solid blocks proved heavy and unwieldy.

"Some inventive mind conceived the idea of a hollow decoy, to lighten the burden of carrying, and experimented with cedar slabs as materials. When the bark was peeled off the rough slabs, the decoy-maker found that the natural curve of the wood was ideally suited for the top and bottom of a decoy. Two pieces were

(Continued on Page 39)

AJAX, FLORIDA

By PLATO WINDER



Ajax, Florida

Dear Mister Editor:

I guess nobody knows better than you what a fellow will do sometimes to catch a fish. You can hide a lake twenty miles deep into the hinterland, put a Dixie steel fence around it and lock it with three padlocks and if there's fish there, you can bet sooner or later you'll find where some fisherman has slipped in and left his trail behind him. Even if you have trespassing signs all over the place and have the reputation of being a mean old man and ready and willing to prosecute at the drop of a hat. There's something about a fisherman and the taking of fish that just naturally unbalances a person's mind.

Recently I had occasion to see what length a fisherman will go in the hope of catching a good string of fish. It's a long story, Mister Editor, and you'll have to bear with me if I get to tell it in full. It was this way.

My name, along with yours and hundreds of other fishermen, is on the lists of most bait manufacturers and every now and again they send out samples of their new product. About a month ago a peculiar looking lure came through the mail called the "Swamp-Cat". I looked it over, laid it up on the mantlepiece and thought that I'd give it a whirl the first chance I had to go fishing. A few nights later a neighbor of mine who owns a beautiful, well-stocked, well-fertilized, ten-acre lake dropped by the house for dinner and it wasn't long before we were talking about baits. Naturally this reminded me of the Swamp-cat so I reached up on the mantle and handed it to him. He was very much impressed. So much, in fact, that I said to him, "Take it along and give it a try; maybe you'll do some good with it." He agreed.

About a week later he called up and in an excited voice demanded to know where I got the bait. It seems that he had been having his roof repaired and the contractor, after putting his crew to work on the roof, had sauntered down to my friend's lake to make a few casts. As he started to leave the house my friend had handed him the Swamp-cat and told the contractor to try it out, that it was new and that he personally didn't know whether or not it would catch fish.

About an hour later the contractor fetched up at my friend's house, talking excitedly and making signs like a man who had just seen a ghost. My friend calmed him down and finally extracted from him the fact that on the first cast of the Swamp-cat the fisherman had snagged a 2½-lb. bass and that on his second cast he had hooked a big one which immediately whirled around a snag and broke the line. The contractor had taken off his clothes and swum out to the snag but couldn't find the Swamp-cat and he was desolate.

He kept urging upon my friend the immediate necessity of getting another Swamp-cat or a dozen more. My friend told him, "I got the bait from Plato Winder. I don't know where he got it but I think it came from Atlanta, Georgia." "Wherever it came from," said the excited fisherman, "I've got to have some more."

Well, Mister Editor, the darndest chase you ever heard of for an elusive bait got underway. My friend had a friend in Atlanta who was a fisherman so he called him on the phone and described the bait and its name. The Atlanta man called every sporting goods house in Atlanta and none had the bait but every one of them wanted at least a dozen Swamp-cats when they heard the story of the contractor and his luck. When the word came back to my neighbor that all possibilities had been explored and no one knew of or had the bait, my neighbor then called me and told me the entire story, winding up with the question, "Where did you get that bait?"

Well sir, I thought, scratched my head, and thought some more but to save my life I couldn't remember where the bait came from. The only semblance of an idea I could conjure up was the impression that I had seen a description of the bait in your FLORIDA WILDLIFE. I said to my friend, "I'll call Bill Hansen and see if he can recall where the Swamp-cat was manufactured.

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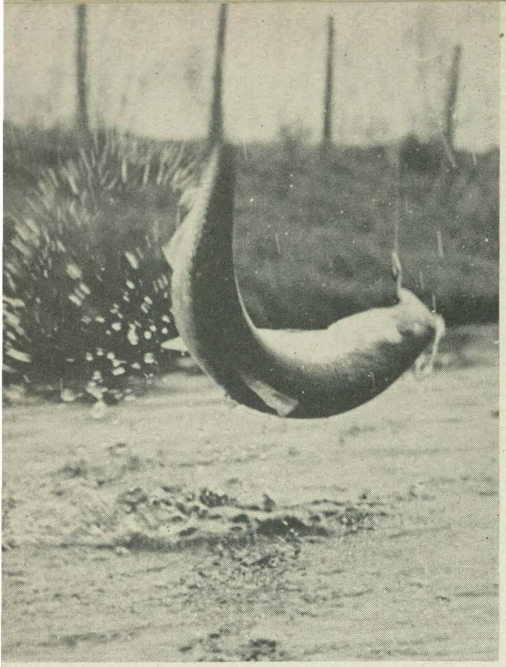
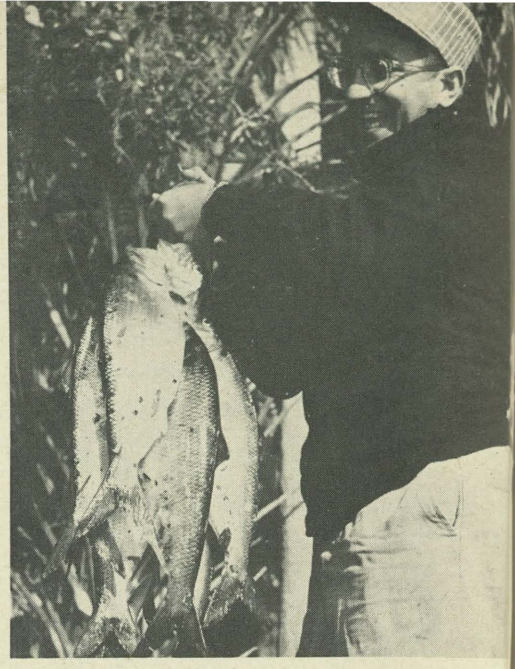


The fighting shad shows its scrappiness as fisherman-photographer Orill Fontaine snaps its picture.

MAD for SHAD

By
SAMUEL ROEN



Some haul, grins author Samuel Roen, proudly displaying his day's catch of shad, nabbed trolling the St. Johns River.

AS THOUGH THE FINE HAND of the state Chamber of Commerce had arranged it to coincide with the Florida tourist season, thousands of fighting shad every winter pour into the St. Johns River to spawn.

Like the throngs of northern cliff dwellers who change scenery in the winter, the scrappy shad leave their regular salt water habitat of the Atlantic Ocean to winter in the north-flowing fresh waters of the St. Johns.

Eager sportsfishermen discovered several years ago that the shad, feeding on muscles along the bottom of the river, were suckers for a man-made bait. Since then many of the shad's age old secrets have been exposed; thousands of shad have been pulled from the St. Johns, and resident and visiting Florida fishermen are in a state of ecstatic joy. And shad roe, the costly delicacy which was once a rare treat indeed, is to be had for the asking—or taking—during shad season.

Teg Grason, my friend-lawyer who will close his law books at the drop of a bait, first lured me to the St. Johns for shad.

"I promise you'll catch shad, and lots of them," he persuaded with deft conviction, "and you'll have the fightingest time of your life."

I did not need too much persuasion, however, because the word about the fabulous shad had gotten around. In practically every fishing spot throughout Central Florida during the months of January and February fish stories center on the tremendously thrilling experience of trolling for shad.

The next morning our party, including Grason and his brother, Louis, Orill Fontaine, a mutual friend who is adept with a camera, and myself, took off from Orlando for the St. Johns. We made up our fishing gear with fresh water rods and reels. For bait we used a tandem rig with number O Reflecto silver spoon plus a yellow feather with lead head aft.

The tandem rig was fixed to the line with a ball bearing swivel. To make it run deep we added three shot sinkers on the line above the swivel. We chose a nylon feather because the color holds well; sometimes buck tail or chicken feathers are used instead.

Driving to a launching point on the river a few miles below Sanford we hoisted our boat into the water. As we eased our way through the hyacinths that carpet and plague much of Florida's inland waterways, I was enlightened about the shad.

In Florida shad begin their spawning run up into the St. Johns River early in January and continue throughout February and part of March. They break out of the salty Atlantic and form small groups of males and females.

The male shad jostle and jolt the female until she secretes her eggs. This same action causes the male to deposit his sperm at the same time, and so neatly does nature complete the cycle of fertilization. The spermed eggs cascade to rest on some obstruction and remain there for hatching unless they are devoured by some other fish. With their 150 or more miles mission up the St. Johns accomplished, the shad leave the fresh water to return to the brine.

It is during this spawning cycle that the Florida anglers are playing havoc with the shad. Before the shad secrets were exposed, little was known of their feeding habits but today it's common knowledge that

they like to feed on muscles or snails along the bottom of the river. And it's common knowledge, too, that the shad will hit a feather or spoon like a jet propelled torpedo.

"We're going up to Lake Harney," Teg announced, "and then you'll be in for some terrific action."

We chugged a few miles to the approach of the widened area known as Lake Harney and dropped our lines overboard. As we putted along almost silently but at a steady pace the river gobbled up our lines. We hadn't moved far when it happened.

I felt the impact on my line. The speedy fulfilling delight was more than I had expected, even with the assurance of my counselor. My rod humped over and I began reeling, reeling. "This is great!" I thought. "I've got to pull this one in." And I reeled. But I *didn't* get him into the boat.

"You've got to set your hook with just the right jerk." It was Teg again. "If you hit it too hard the soft mouthed shad will leave you. And when you reel one in you have to keep that line tight or you lose your shad. These fellas," he added, "don't hang around when they get a chance to break loose."

I swallowed my biter pill, and let my line out for another try. We moved further down the river and closer to Lake Harney. It was not quite 9:00 A.M. but the big Florida sun had already burst out in full glowing bloom. The sun and a clear day help the shad angler plenty. When the sun hits the water right, the spoon is more than the shad can resist. Everything seemed right as we all stared into the shimmering water. It was right, too, for almost immediately I had another strike. This time I wouldn't muff it. I set my hook and started reeling.

"Keep him coming!" yelled Orill. "Look at him leap!" And he shot into the air. Then he began to drag and I fought him. Closer and closer I drew him to the boat. When he was within 15 yards of the boat I caught sight of him.

"He's a beauty," I sang out, "and I'm going to bring this one in!"

Working him in nearer and nearer I got a first hand look at my first shad. His forked tail cracked to and fro. He dashed to the port side of the boat and I had to move across with him to hold on. He was not going to give up without a struggle. But neither was I. Snapping, cracking and leaping, he was finally alongside the boat. He was a brilliant iridescent fellow sparkling through his cloak of green water.

"Boat him!" Teg shouted as he shoved the net to me. Up out of the water I lifted him and into the net he sank, still wiggling and still fighting. Out of the water his scaled body looked like shining silver sequins. My first Shad was a real beauty.

While I was homing my catch I hadn't noticed that Orill was tied into action, too. His strike was more rewarding than mine. In rapid reaction to his hit, he was ricocheting around the boat from side to side. He had more of a tussle than I had.

"I've got something heavy," he announced. He reeled his haul alongside the boat and we saw why. He had captured two shad on his line—one on the feather and one on the spoon.

"This is why they call Florida the 'Fisherman's Paradise,'" Teg smiled as he held the net for Orill.

Then our host and his brother joined the hit parade with consecutive strikes. Noon, however, crept up on us and the action came to abrupt end. Since the shad weren't interested in feeding, we took time out for lunch.

"There's nothing in the world to do when they stop," Teg explained, "so we might as well just hold off for an hour or more."

Swatches of clouds had moved into the sky over us and screened the light. I thought that this certainly would spell the end of our great start. But after lunch the clouds moved along and the sun was back beaming all over the river. Then

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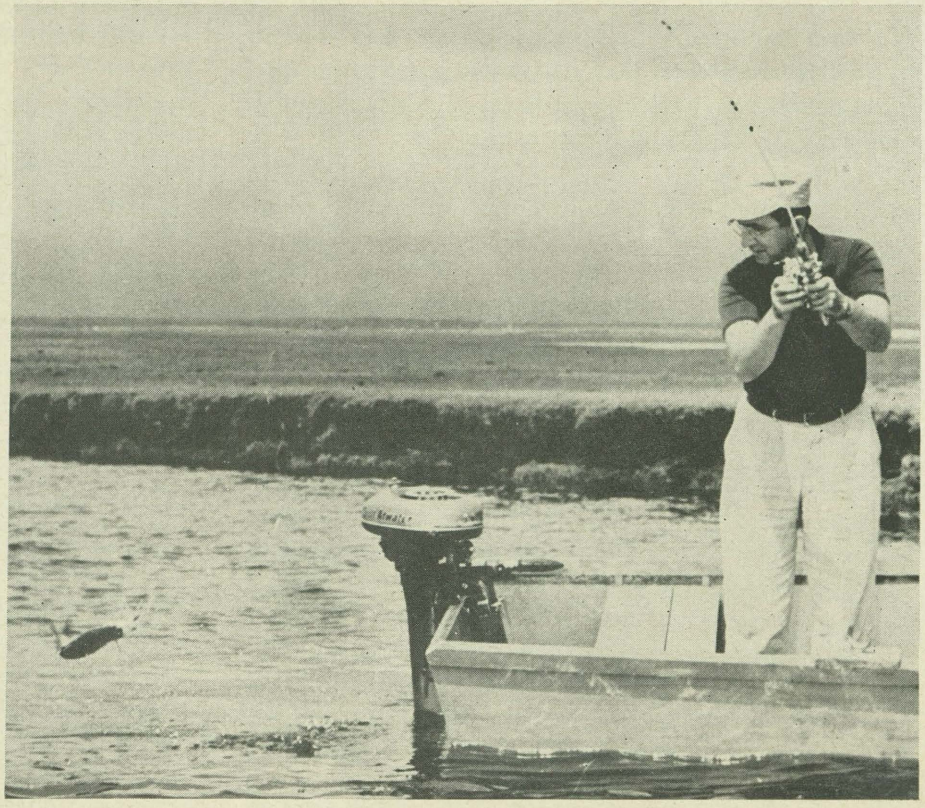
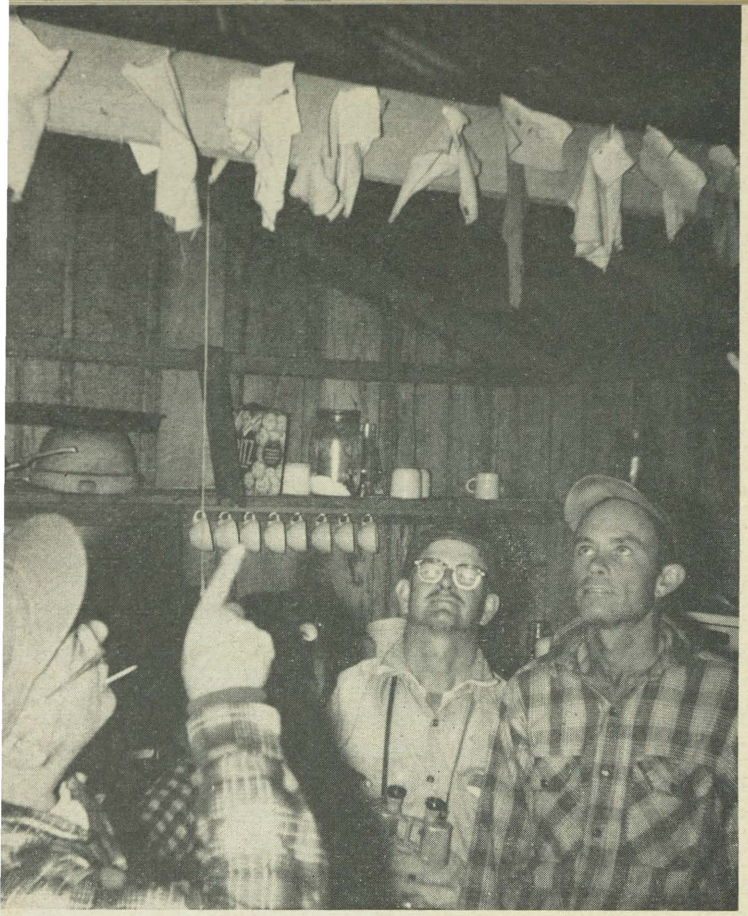


Shad are suckers for the spoon and feather. Roen nabs another scrappy shad that really gives a squirming fight for his life.



J. L. Wright, veteran deer hunter of Jacksonville, points out to guest Fred Waldron (center) and son Dick Wright, collection of shirt-tails taken from hunters who missed their deer. Tagged with names and dates, they are silent mementos of many exciting hunts.

An animal of extreme majesty and wisdom, the Big Buck deserves a noble death. I, personally, like to believe that he was . . .

BORN to be BAGGED

By EDMUND McLAURIN

IT WAS THROUGH J. L. Wright, veteran deer hunter from Jacksonville, that I first learned of the existence of the big, twelve-point buck of Ocala National Forest's high ridge and scrub oak country.

The season before, I had run across fairly fresh tracks of what must have been an unusually large deer, while hunting an abandoned lumbering site off Forest Road No. 10, but a slow, careful stalk, marked by alternate periods of motionless waiting and listening, had been fruitless. Only the oversize hoof prints in the now barely discernible access road formerly used by the loggers certified that the big buck, or at least a deer with big feet, existed.

But my friend Wright, who maintains a private, non-commercial camp within one-quarter of a mile of the Oklawaha River and the State Game Commission's check-in station, had actually seen the big buck. I listened in serious silence as he described him to me.

"I'll tell you, he's a big one, Mac! Twelve points sure, and he's as smart as they come. I've seen him only once although I have run across his tracks several times and have tried to trail him. Last year, I am certain that Cowboy, our best hound, was hot on his trail. But Dick and I couldn't keep up with Cowboy when the deer headed for the thick scrub country."

Even though the episode had taken place almost a year prior to the conversation, there was no mistaking the lasting excitment in Wright's voice. I could tell he wanted that big buck. So did I; that's why I had gone to Ocala two weeks prior to the opening of the deer season, to look things over and build tree stands at choice hunting spots. I wanted a trophy kill, not just another deer.

"Where and when did you see the Big Buck?" I inquired pointedly. For a few seconds, Wright looked at me silently as if pondering a decision of great importance. I knew I was asking a lot of him in requesting specific information but, unlike many hunters, Wright is not selfish. He is always ready to give a helping hand to any hunter who takes his deer hunting seriously.

"Come with me and I'll show you," Wright said. "I saw the Big Buck only yesterday. I was exploring a cutover area off Road 18 when he got up out of a thick patch of brush not far from where I was walking. I missed seeing his tracks because he had entered his bed from the north instead of across the trail I was travelling," he explained.

I climbed into the Jeep beside Wright and we bounced down Forest Road 17 after turning north off Florida No. 316. Approximately two miles from our turnoff spot we again made a sharp turn, to take a woods' road winding east towards Forest Road 18.

Five minutes later, Wright braked the Jeep to a jerking stop.

"This is the spot, Mac. I was walking along that trail there when the Big Buck got up out of that thick brush over there." Wright pointed, to further clarify the exact location of himself and the deer. "When he got up from his bed in that thick brush he had to first twist his antlers clear before he could run." Again Wright used his hands expressively for emphasis.

I got out of the Jeep and walked over to the spot. The big tracks going away were still visible.

"Golly, but I'd like to get a shot at that fellow!," I said.

"If you do, you've got to be plenty fast, Mac. That deer may be big, but he's fast once he starts moving . . . Suppose you join the family at the camp just before Opening Day and we will make the try together."

"Thanks," I said. "I'd like that very much" I added in sincere appreciation. In my opinion, Wright is one of the best deer hunters in Florida and his son Dick is one of the best dog handlers. To be invited to hunt with them is a real privilege.

We did get to hunt together, but the Big Buck wasn't among the kills hung from the camp's meat hooks for final dressing out. No one killed the big deer that season; in fact, no one *saw* him — only his tracks, challenging hoof imprints that neither man nor dog could seem to successfully follow up to their source.

When hard pressed by hunters and dogs most of the buck deer in that particular area tend to head for the thick growth bordering the Oklawaha River. Many even cross that ordinarily natural boundary, stopping only when they find safety on the opposite side. Those closer to the Wildlife Refuge acreage head for that closed-to-hunting section when the shooting starts. These mass movements apparently increase as the hunting season progresses and hunters concentrate activity on certain areas. It is the hunters and dogs that keep the deer on the move.

But the Big Buck — as yet unkilled — evidently does not conform to usual habits, for his tracks, frequently grouped with those of one to three other deer, have been seen at widely scattered points and at times in exactly opposite directions to the general deer herd mid-hunting season migrations.

The first time I saw the Big Buck, he caught me flat footed under hunting circumstances most favorable to him and decidedly unfavorable to me. Within seconds, he cancelled out years of deer hunting experience and numerous kills by out-smarting me as easily as if I had been a first-time afield hunter.

It was the morning of the second day of that particular season when additional thousands of hunters chose to hunt the Ocala National Forest area. Seemingly, during the peak hunting periods of each day, there was a hunter behind almost every bush; seldom were the deer-seekers more than fifty yards apart.

I had chosen to still-hunt a section of the Forest just off Road 16, about one-half of a mile south of paved Florida highway No. 314 and approximately three-eighths of a mile northeast of Lake Eaton. A couple of hours before daylight, I quietly entered the area

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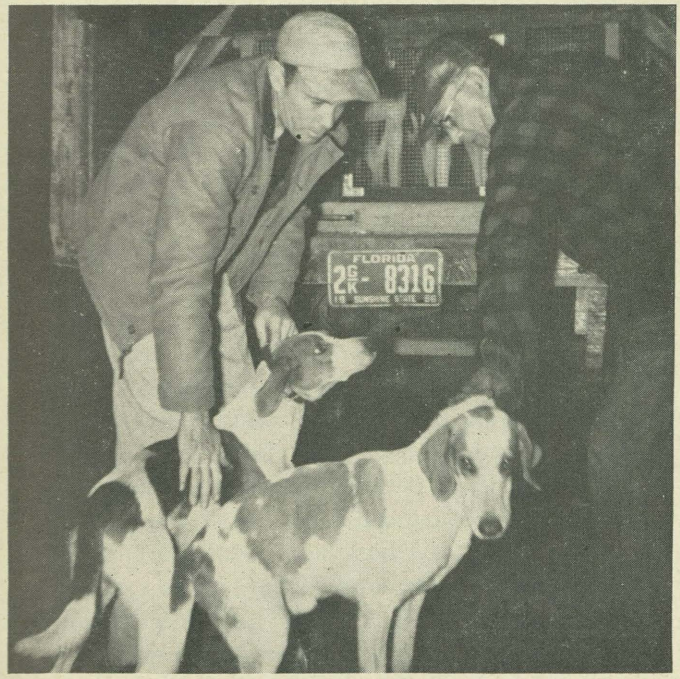
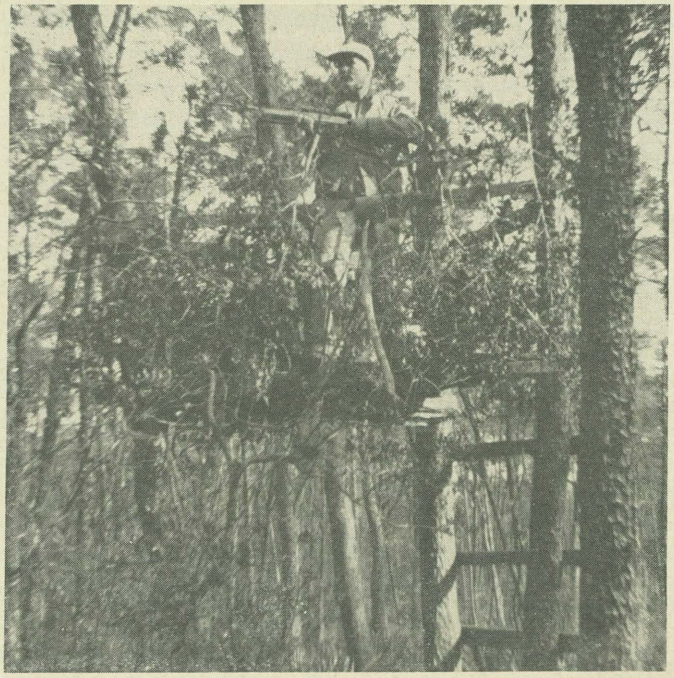


During open season, the Wrights load their deer hounds long before daylight. They run one pack in morning, use a fresh kennel for the afternoon hunt.



My stand was a platform in the trees. From it I had a good view of surrounding countryside. I spotted four does but no bucks during my long vigil.

Mid-day roadside confabs with other hunters operating from camps along Ocala National Forest roads 7, 17, and 19, established the fact that the Big Buck had a wide range of activity and that when his tracks had been found often there were also tracks of two smaller deer.

Harold Fugate (in truck) and Carter Harrison, load one of the morning's kills for transportation to the nearest weighing-in station.

(Continued from Preceding Page)

and took a position on a slight rise of ground overlooking a known game trail that meandered through the scrub towards the lake. As is my personal preference, I had a tree to my back and offered minimum visibility of my person to both deer and other hunters.

Sometime around 9:30 A. M. a doe wandered into the area, travelling an obviously familiar route and moving slowly and without fear. We saw each other simultaneously but since I remained motionless, even though I was practically staring her in the face from fifteen feet to one side of the trail, she was not alarmed. After gazing intently for what seemed long minutes, she dropped her head an slowly walked away. Instantly I covered her with my rifle — not that I'd illegally shoot a doe under any circumstances, but simply because I make it a practice to align my sights on every deer I encounter, to develop fast and instinctice gun handling. When the doe again looked in my direction, the reticule of my scope sight showed every detail of her soft, moist eyes and big ears. She gave me another long examination but, satisfied that I was a harmless, immobile object, continued to wander down the trail. Forty yards away, beside a small blowdown of dead timber and low brush, she stopped and looked back a final time before disappearing around a curve of the trail.

A half an hour later two hunters came barging down the trail, talking loudly and seemingly oblivious to surroundings. They never saw me at all.

But when they reached the spot on the trail from which the doe had last stopped and looked back, they both spotted the fresh tracks and halted to examine them briefly before continuing in the direction of Lake Eaton.

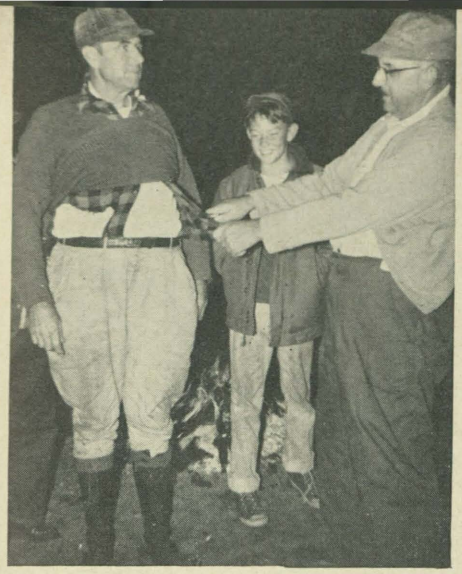
My own curiosity aroused, I did something I ordinarily never do during a hunting period — and to this day I don't exactly know why I did it. Perhaps, as I have said, it was curiosity; again, perhaps it was merely a physical act to break the monotony of the long hours of almost motionless vigil: I silently unlocked and partially opened the bolt of my .30-06 rifle for a safe carry, picked up my camera and canteen and walked down the trail to examine the doe's tracks myself.

Just as I knelt in the trail on one knee, hands burdened with camera, canteen and uncocked rifle, the Big Buck suddenly broke from the timber blowdown less than fifteen feet away! Three or four bounds, head bowing low with each stride, and he was again in concealing cover, leaving me surprised and chagrined, but excited about the whole episode and the magnificence of his twelve point (estimated) rack of antlers.

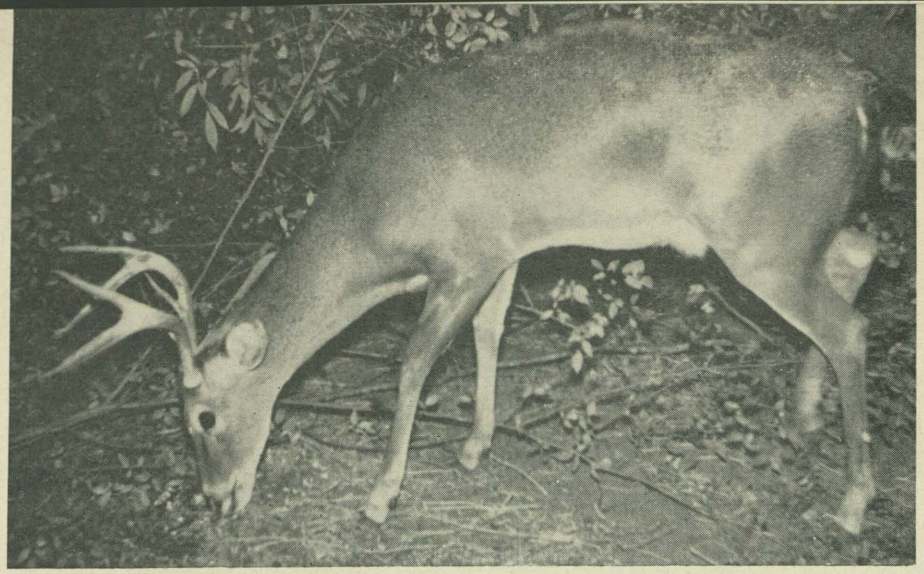
He had been there all the time — right in front of my eyes and not more than forty yards away! Had I been carrying binoculars and using them, I might have seen him hiding.

Wisely, he had bedded down that morning, long before daylight, after escaping the hunting of Opening Day and feeding undisturbed during the night. He had let the two hunters stop almost beside his bed without his natural nervousness overcoming his good judgment. I am convinced that he got up only because he suspicioned that I had discovered his hideout.

For a minute or two afterwards I felt pretty bad about the whole thing; then I realized how cleverly the wise old buck has outsmarted me and I suddenly grasped the humor of it, despite my combined dissappointment and self-crimination. I doffed my cap in the direction of his disappearance. "Another day, an-



This hunter missed his buck! Now he stands in embarrassed silence as a member of his party collects customary price of failure.



In the yard of an abandoned farmhome there were numerous signs of feeding deer. Sometime during the night, a buck visited the spot where we set up a camera with flashgun unit, triggered to go off when a feeding deer touched an almost invisible thread.

other meeting..." I hopefully soliloquized, as I left the sector to re-join companions for a roadside lunch and a resume of the mornings hunting. But although I hunted a five mile area surrounding the spot where I encountered the Big Buck, I never saw him again, nor did other hunters I questioned that season. This was not surprising, considering the fact that when he eluded me, he subsequently sneaked by or hid from at least thirty hunters dispersed throughout the same area.

The first week of this season the Big Buck's tracks showed up again, and conspicuously so among those of smaller deer.

Mid-day roadside confabs with hunters operating from camps along National Forest roads 7, 17 and 19 also established the fact that the Big Buck had a wide range of activity, and that when his tracks had been found often there were tracks of two other deer. One of the latter, a small, almost black buck with a Christmas-tree-like rack, had been seen twice, but both times had exhibited such speed that he afforded hunters only a glimpse of his trophy-head, never an opportunity for a shot.

As lone operators, we were obviously not getting anywhere. Maybe by combining our resources of hunters, guns, dogs, mobile equipment and hunting know-how we could get results, we all decided. Fresh tracks pretty well established the approximate whereabouts of the Big Buck and his two occasional cronies.

We set the date and time for the joint try for the morning before Thanksgiving.

Wright, his wife (who has since passed away), son Dick, grandson Richard, John Tien and I drove three miles in a Jeep against icy-tasting wind to meet hunters and equipment from the camps of Harold Fugate, Carter Harrison, Luther Penuel and Fred Waldron.

When we consolidated our parties, re-divided into two main groups and climbed aboard two of the available trucks we looked more like an armed posse seeking an escaped murderer than deer hunters. In two other trucks the dogs of all groups alternately whined impatiently and occassionally a few of the more discontented fought among themselves. Although it was a sunny Florida day, it was so cold that some hunter facing the icy wind in the truck I occupied asked the driver to stop so he could go back and retrieve his frozen, broken off and dropped ears! I was glad when the truck rolled to a stop and Wright called out, "This is your stand, Mac. Good luck!"

I climbed over the truck's tail-gate and headed for a partially concealed small wood platform cradled amid a cluster of young trees. The river wind cut through my hunting clothes like an icy knife as I climbed up to the platform, loaded my rifle and settled down for what proved to be a long wait, marked only by the brief appearance of four does heading north.

However, Fred Waldron, of Wildwood, on the stand next to me, got a quick glimpse of the little — and very fast — almost black buck with the Christmas-tree-like rack — but only a teasing, momentary glimpse.

Others in the party were more fortunate. Luther Penuel, of Ocala, occupying a stand atop a road fence-post shot a beautiful seven-point buck that came from the brush behind him, crossed the road and paused just long enough for a shot.

Carter Harrison, bearded hunter from Williston, who had sworn not to shave until he had bagged his deer, got the second buck of the morning — an animal believed to be a part-time crony of the Big Buck.

(Continued on Page 38)

The out-of-doors man knows well what is meant when Florida is made an example as the state with the worst fire record in the nation.

ARSON in the WOODS

By JOHN H. DANAHY

CONVICT HIM? C'mon, be serious," wailed Fred as he turned his head, elbows still on the bar.

Fred was an old-timer in this neck of the woods and could remember long before most people in the county had heard of a Florida Forest Service Investigator. Fred just couldn't fashion the long arm of the law accusing just because of a fire to 'scare up some game.'

Andy, who moved here after he came back from Korea in '52, spun around, his feet swinging clear, and counted on his fingers, "For one thing two witnesses saw him. Two, they have definite evidence that it was intentionally set." Then pausing as if the next point was the clincher, he continued, "And that phony story he trumped up, why he as much as admits he's guilty of starting the fire. They could sure can him for this one."

A bit of past county history was then quoted to Andy when Fred knowing he could end the conversation said, "Now all that won't 'mount to a hill-o-beans. I've yet to see the day in that court when a fire put a man behind bars."

Both Andy and Fred are symbolic of the problem of intentionally set woodsfires in Florida. Not everyone has the attitude of Fred, but then again not many citizens have the attitude of Andy. Let's get it straight right here. There is no in between attitude. Any wildfire is a violation of Florida's Fire Laws whether carelessly or intentionally set.

Arson, or incendiarism is paramount in importance when placing blame for Florida's infamous fire record. Certainly over half of the fires are carelessly set, but they can be eventually handled through education. The arsonist must feel the heavy weight of the law. But before getting into this problem, let's clear the sportsman of his part in our fire record with only a slap on the wrist.

Of the more than seven thousand fires that occurred on Florida's protected land last year, only 132 were attributed to campers. These fires are classified as camping or warming fires that escaped because they

Crew stands by ready to go to work on woods fire. Arson is paramount in importance when placing blame for Florida's infamous fire record.

Florida Forest Service planes are important aids in spotting fires, sometimes help in the apprehension of arsonists.

were unattended or various other reasons. Obviously the camper and hunter are not guilty for the more serious fires in Florida. Sportsmen in the woods are generally very careful with fire. They therefore need only be admonished to continue to use fire wisely.

The out-of-doors man knows well what is meant when Florida is made an example of as the state with the worst fire record in the nation. He knows the disappointment of having a favorite game area destroyed by wildfire. Chances are he's seen his share of unquenchable flames whet its appetite with sapplings and seedlings or the tender grasses hiding the fearful game, confused, with no sense of direction to safety.

Many woodsmen and sportsmen know what to do when they come upon such a scene. But for those who may be in doubt as to the correct move, here's a few simple suggestions.

First and foremost, send someone to the nearest phone to notify the County Fire Control Unit. The telephone number will be in the front section of the phone book. If there is no directory then call the operator and have her connect you with the Forest Service Unit. Of course, this is the procedure if you are in a county that is protected by the Florida Forest Service. Should you not be in a protected county then call the nearest fire department as they normally will have their own procedure for wildfires.

No one is asked to be a hero, neither are you expected to put out fires that you come upon. Should you feel that you can handle the fire, there are a few suggestions you can follow. The best instrument to put out a fire that is both low and not too hot, is the top of a pine sapling. Break it and use it to stomp out the fire. If you cannot control the fire, don't worry about it. Once the Forest Service Unit gets the word things happen fast. The fire will be contained and the heavy equipment will do a thorough job.

Now lets look at the odds concerning that fire. It would be an easy 2 to 5 bet that it was intentionally set. In 1956 nearly 3000 fires were criminally started. Yes, they were crimes, whether the persons who set them thought so or not. To you, this means one thing —keep your eyes open, and stay alert. What you see may be invaluable.

A contact may be made later by a member of the Florida Forest Service, and what you tell him can be extremely important. How many fires were there? Did you see any strangers in the vicinity? What about ground or weather conditions? Did you see any evidence of arson?

These questions can be answered by being observant. No matter how well placed your intentions may be, you are *strongly* advised against picturing yourself to be a famous television detective. To be more emphatic, by all means do not move or touch anything that might be considered evidence. Be sure of what you see so that positive identification can be made.

As a citizen you are asked to do very little. But what little you do is so highly prized that cash rewards are offered when information leads to the conviction of an arsonist.

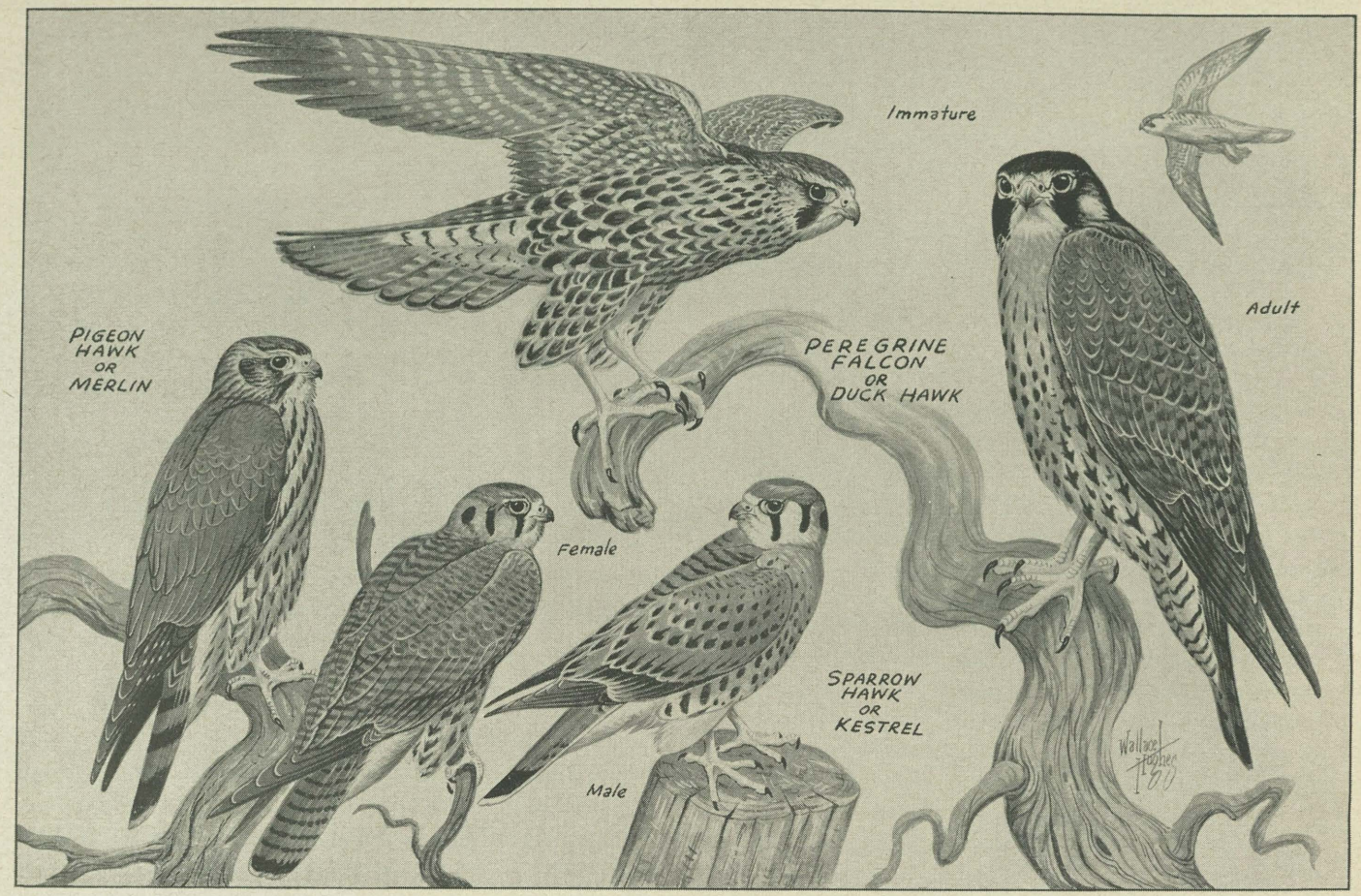
There are three different reward systems that have been set up with many thousands of dollars to help stamp out intentional woodsburning. The Florida Board of Forestry offers up to $250 under Florida Statutes in the case of each conviction. The Florida Bankers Association offers $1000 a year for this purpose, and a recently created Forest Arson Fund has an initial amount of $10,000 set up for rewards. This fund is contributed to by landowners and industry and administered by a rewards committee.

The gravity of the problem is quickly realized in the seriousness of the rewards. But the problem of conviction is many fold and you can have a part in its solution just by being openly against intentional woodsburning. The past has shown that juries would not convict a man for woods arson for the simple reason that they didn't believe it was a serious offense.

This is so true even when evidence unmistakably points to a defendant's guilt as in a case tried twice in 1952. A Forest Service pilot in an aircraft noticed a man on horseback stringing fire through the woods. After descending to a lower altitude, he made identification and notified the ground crews stationed in

(Continued on Page 37)

FLORIDA BIRDLIFE



Duck Hawk, *Falco peregrinus anatum*

The dashing duck hawk is the most majestic of the birds of prey. Its qualities of fearlessness, power, speed and beauty command widespread admiration and respect.

Its long, pointed wings and the rather long compressed tail identify the bird as one of the falcons. The body size is approximately that of the red-tailed hawk. The total length varies from 15 to 20 inches and the wingspread from 43 to 46 inches. The female averages considerably larger in size than the male. The bold head pattern and the heavily barred under parts are very similar to the markings of the closely related Peregrine of Europe and parts of Asia. As a matter of fact, the duck hawk is often called Peregrine in this country.

The duck hawk is primarily a bird hunter, preying on a great variety of species ranging from small warblers to birds the size of ducks and herons. The usual method of hunting is to attain a position above and slightly behind the intended victim. The hawk then pitches into a dive, driving downward at a steep angle and striking the bird with folded talons. At an estimated speed of between 150 to 200 miles an hour, the blow from the falcon's "fist" kills outright, or at least puts the prey effectively out of action. Small mammals and insects make up a small portion of the duck hawk's diet.

Although the species is a winter resident throughout the state, it is nowhere seen in any great numbers.

Pigeon Hawk, *Falco columbarius columbarius.*

The dashing little Pigeon Hawk is another of the high spirited falcons. Its appearance, both in the air as well as on the perch, is very similar to that of a pigeon. This fact, rather than any special inclination to prey on pigeons is the reason for its common name.

Resembling closely the related Merlin, a European falcon, the Pigeon Hawk is sometimes known by that name in this country. Another commonly used name is bullet hawk, recognizing the sizzling speed of this small counterpart of the Duck Hawk.

An indication of its speed and skill in the air is the fact that both swallows and bats, noted aerial performers, are not uncommonly taken by the Pigeon Hawk. Small birds, up to the size of meadowlarks and flickers, and large insects are staples in the diet. Dragonflies appear to be a favorite food but many grasshoppers, cicadas, and butterflies are also taken.

The boldly barred tail tipped with

white and the dark, heavy streaking on the underparts make good field marks. The Pigeon Hawk is a regular winter resident of the state, although it is not common in any section.

Sparrow Hawk, *Falco sparverius.*

This little falcon, distributed throughout the country, is probably the most widely known of the birds of prey. Its small size and the habit of hovering in the air on rapidly beating wings while scanning the ground for prey are good ways to identify the bird. The high-pitched staccato call, sounding like *killy-killy,* gives rise to one of its commonly applied local names, Killy Hawk.

During seasons when there is an abundance of insects, these form the bulk of the Sparrow Hawk's diet. Grasshoppers are especially sought. Beetles, dragonflies, spiders, crickets, and caterpillars are also important foods. Small mammals such as cotton rats and meadow mice make up a seasonally important portion of the diet. English sparrows and other small birds may be taken at times although they normally make up only a small portion of the food.

The sparrow hawk is a bird of the more open sections. It is a common year around resident throughout the state. Nests are usually located in natural tree cavities or in holes made by woodpeckers. The heavily spotted eggs, cream buff with reddish-brown markings, number from 4 to 6. ●

ARSON IN THE WOODS

(Continued from Page 35)

cars. A hot pursuit followed, during which the rider was observed from the aircraft to change from the horse to a truck. After he was apprehended the man denied setting the fires and denied riding the horse. The case was tried twice and both times the jury was split and would not convict. They were declared mistrials. Here, where the crime was witnessed and evidence was presented, the jury ignored the facts and an arsonist went free.

The following year in Santa Rosa County the law was again frustrated by a ridiculous story sworn to by two brothers. They were followed in their car by two Forest Service personnel in an area where more than a score of fires had occurred that day. At 8:30 p.m. the car stopped and twice a flame shot out of the car and into the woods.

After they were apprehended the car was found to have two half empty boxes of no. four Diamond matches on the seat, one full box on the floor, and three full boxes in the glove compartment. There were other facts in the case, but when the trial was over, the two were found not guilty when they told the jury that they denied setting the fires, and that the fire they were observed to have ignited must have started when one brother stated he "thumped a cigarette out of the window." The 'cigarette' landed 49 feet from the road in the woods and six matches were found where the fire started.

This was just a few years ago, but today we can feel a gradual change coming about in the attitude of the public towards intentionally set wildfire. This fact is seen in a more strict handling of cases in woods arson by juries. Arsonsists and would-be-arsonists cannot be influenced through reasoning. They cannot be told it doesn't pay, because often it does. Some woods burners will start a fire to force a timber sale or to buy timber or land at a cheap price. They will also buy other material that remains from a gutted stand of timber.

No matter what reason they pursue, it is still a crime that can be punished by $1000 or 5 years in jail or both. Up to now they have had no fear of the law because it was seldom used and they could count on getting off unscathed.

As a hunter and sportsman, or fisherman, you have a keen interest naturally, in the conservation of our forests and streams. It is therefore your duty as a citizen to protect this natural habitat of our fish and wildlife from the thoughtless lawlessness of the arsonist. Besides robbing something that affords many pleasures to you, your sons, and your friends, it robs your state of millions of dollars in jobs and income every year.

The Florida Forest Service's ten investigators have a tremendous job during the fire season and you can help them by keeping your eyes open when you are in the woods. ●

DUCK DECOYS

(Continued from Page 17)

creased when shooting open waters for deep divers such as the canvasback.

As for the sinker, my choice is a home-made "mushroom" type. Here's how they're made:

Form an inverted "U" staple from heavy wire, flaring out the open ends at right-angles for about one-half inch.

Fill a coffee can with dampened fine-grain sand. Press a tennis ball about one-third of the way into the sand, forming a cup. Heat scrap lead in a ladle. Suspend the mooring staple over the cuplike depression, about halfway down into it. Pour the lead slowly into the depression, making sure that the lead covers the outspread "wings" of the staple.

Tie the decoy to one end of the mooring line and the sinker to the other end and you're in business. These mushroom anchors will hold fast against a surprising amount of wind and tide. And the heavier mooring line will make their handling a lot easier. Wrap the lines in a figure "8" around the neck and under the tail.

For storing and transporting decoys, a good trick is to round up a number of 50-pound potato sacks from your grocery store. Weave a length of heavy cord in and out of the coarse fabric around the bag's mouth. This makes a good draw string. Break your decoys into half-dozen bagloads for minimum damage and ease of handling. ●

MAD FOR SHAD

(Continued from Page 29)

about 1:30 the shad started striking again.

Up the river and down the river we trolled, bubbling with joy, picking these silvery scrappers out of the drink with exciting regularity. We were not alone, either, for it was picturesquely evident by the smiling faces in the other boats that glided along the river that the shad had not singled us out as the one fishing party they would most like to be caught by. The shad bonanza was on for all.

Even a lonely fellow who stood on the edge of the shore at a jut out point was showing his catch to boat fishermen who drifted near him. He was an example of those who prefer to cast with spinning tackle from the bank. And there were some enthusiasts who were happily casting their spinning tackle from anchored boats.

While there were different methods being used to catch shad, one thing was common to all: Everyone was enjoying this spectacular sport fishing—from a boat, from an elevated bank or from the edge of a jut out with casting or spinning tackle.

About 3:00 P.M. the shad went to rest again. We decided to head for the launching point up the river. On the way we took inventory of our successful day and the total take ran to 24 shad. They averaged about 4½ pounds with the larger ones getting up to almost six.

Back in Orlando we set about the business of separating the men from the girl fish, which contained the real loot of our catch—the roe. Less than half of our shad were with roe but we did have several pounds.

As the wonderful day drew to a close I had to admit my friend had kept his promise. And it was very obvious why sport shad fishing has become so phenomenally popular in Central Florida.

This season will undoubtedly bring more and more anglers to the St. Johns River because the epidemic is spreading. Certainly schooled fishermen and novices alike will again be joined in the great project of hoisting thousands of shad out of the bottom of the river. And why shouldn't they! The thrills are terrific, and few wives can complain about being a fish widow when Dad brings home a favorite delicacy, shad roe. ●

BORN TO BE BAGGED

(Continued from Page 33)

Carter made a nice long shot with his Savage model 99 .30-30 lever-action.

But, so far, no one has killed the Big Buck. Unless killed by a lucky hunter, pulled down by one of the few panthers inhabiting the Ocala country, or fatal injury by a car while crossing a road at night, the Big Buck will one day probably succumb to old age or screw-worm infestations. His demise, in one form or another, is inevitable and not too far distant. According to leading game biologists, few wild deer live more than six years although protected captive specimens may live to be 20 years old.

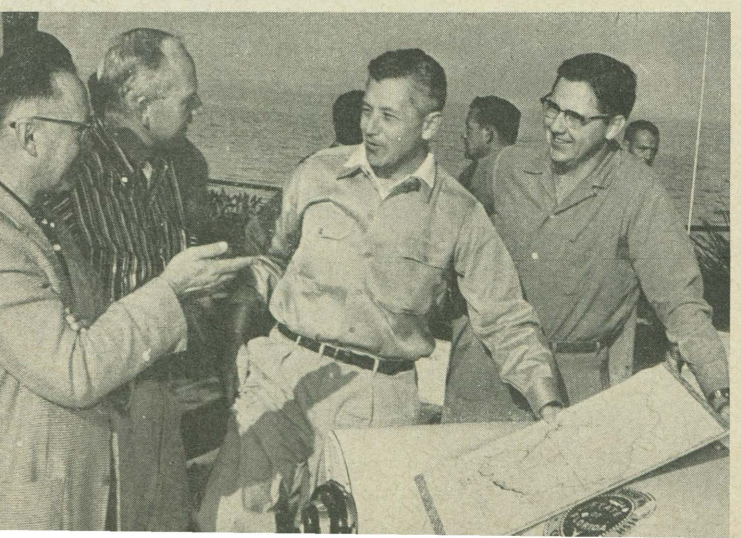
An animal of the majesty and wisdom of the Big Buck deserves a noble death. I, personally, would like to believe that the Big Buck was born to be bagged.

Perhaps you'll kill him. The current season is not yet ended . . . But you'll have to compete against the Wrights and me. We want the Big Buck, too. ●

Commission Director A. D. "Bob" Aldrich, left, explains the recent selective poisoning operation at Lake Apopka to Governor Leroy Collins, center. E. T. "Red" Heinen (2nd from left), Chief of the Fish Management Division and Bill Woods, right, Fisheries Technician, listen in.

The February issue of FLORIDA WILDLIFE will carry the full story of the Apopka project, the largest selective poisoning job yet conducted.

Photo by Ed Timmons



HUNTING AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

(Continued from Page 5)

possibly 25,000 years ago. There are several cases on record of human-made articles being found in close association with the remains of long-extinct animals. There is one report of an arrowhead being found embedded in the skull of a mastodon.

The effect these early hunters exerted on the struggle for existence of the Ice Age mammals can only be guessed at. Did the first Floridians kill them off with their spears and traps? Did they ruin their feeding grounds by fire and axes?

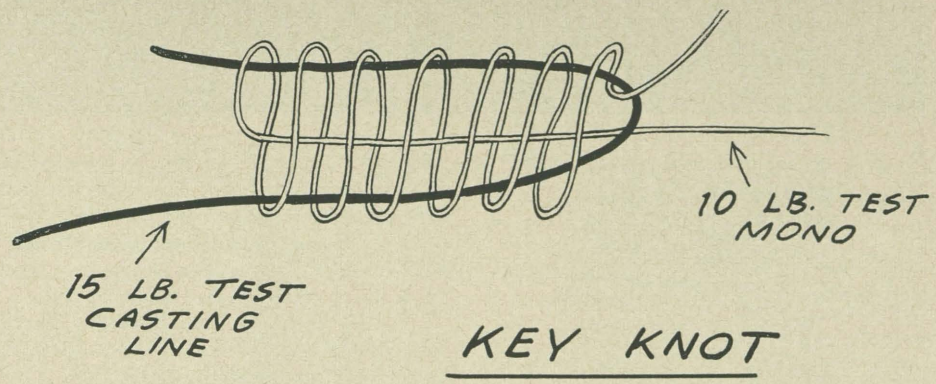
Man's progress today if often the equivalent of destruction for wildlife. This could have been true 10,000 years ago.

Florida with lions and tigers, elephants and rhinos, peccaries and tapirs! Hunting ain't what it used to be. ●

FISHING

(Continued from Page 10)

ends off short, leaving perhaps an eighth of an inch of the fly line sticking out. This knot is neat and small and holds very well, because it sets itself in the finish of the fly line and is held in place by the tremendous pressure generated thru the stretch of the monofilament. It's a good knot.



The Key Knot

Here is one that really fills a bill for the plug caster who wants to use braided nylon casting line. We all agree that a leader is a good idea, but getting it tied onto the braided nylon has always been a chore. It can be done with a barrel knot, but the wear and tear on the nervous system is frightful.

Here's how I rig my own outfit, using a 6-ft., light casting rod, a light reel, and 12½-lb., soft braided nylon line. I tie in enough 8 or 10 pound mono so, when I am ready to cast with the usual drop to the plug, the Keys knot is just an inch or so above the level wind. This gives me almost six feet of mono leader. The leader absorbs all the wear and tear of casting that used to fray my braided mono, weakening the casting end constantly. This six foot of mono produces more strikes, and the Keys knot travels thru the guides and tip with nary a bump. As you can see, I'm really sold on it. Here's how to tie it (see illustration).

Again, make your tying ends generous. The tying is done with the braided line. I bend the mono back on itself for six or eight inches, pinching the bend to make the loop stay small. As shown, the braided part is brought back alongside the double mono and held by thumb and forefinger, while the loops are being tied in. In tying the Keys knot, the braided nylon should be under tension as the loops are tied around it. I either get someone to hold the line for me or put a heavy weight on the braided part a foot or so from the knot, against which I can exert a slight pull with my thumb and forefinger.

After enough loops are in place (make them small and neat) pass the tying end of the braided nylon thru the loop in the mono. Now, still holding the loops in place with thumb and forefinger, pull the knot up tight, working a little at a time from both ends. Set by stretching.

If you have tied the Keys knot properly, it will be small and neat. It will hang straight. It's a wonderful knot.

Reading back over this column, it sounds complicated even to me, but try as I might, I can't see how I can make it any simpler. Believe me, it only sounds complicated. These knots are really not very hard to tie, but don't say I didn't warn you. ●

THEY'VE GOT TO BE GOOD

(Continued from Page 26)

fastened together and a rough body was shaped. Then the two pieces were separated and each gouged out, then puttied, caulked and nailed together. Neck and head were whittled with a penknife and fastened to the body in accordance with personal ideas. The decoy was next finished off with a rasp-file and sanded; painted with a prime coat to prevent waterlogging and, finally, given a finish coat. A feather-effect was created by using a comb on the final coat of paint before it was entirely dry. Flat paints were always used by the true artisans.

"Decoys were usually weighted with about four ounces of lead, nailed or screwed to the bottoms, to serve as stabilizing keels. Staples or leather thongs were fastened at the forward end, for attaching anchor lines, and the decoys were then complete."

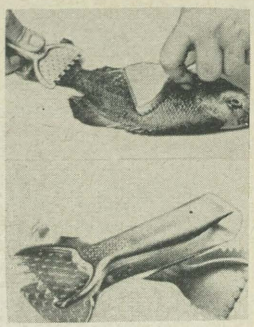
Probably the ultima Thule of decoy shooting is the goose hunter of today who sits in a blind in a damp rice field with dozens of baby diapers and a few profile decoys scattered around him! He may be considered crazy, but isn't. Actually, baby diapers combined with about a dozen lifelike decoys make a fairly attractive layout to high-flying honkers. But, for most of us, sets utilizing finely-detailed decoys, like those in Richard Moeller's collection, are preferable.

Even so, problems are apt to arise . . . . .

Without mentioning any names, Bill Scifres tells the amusing story of a Florida duck hunter who set out twelve lifelike decoys, then suddenly discovered he had a raft of 13. Not concerned with the ethics of sportsmanship as related to shooting birds on the water, the hunter aimed and fired at his selected target — only to have the real duck fly off unscathed as he blasted to pieces one of his decoys!

The best decoys in Moeller's collection probably couldn't surpass such double-duty fooling; when modern decoys prove that good, even Moeller wants to take a look at them. ●

FLORIDA WILDLIFE FIELD TESTS AND TELLS



There are a million and one fishing gadgets on the current sports equipment market, with most of them created to serve some useful, time-saving purpose. Some of the more expensive ones are often of questionable dollar value, while some of the group selling for only a dollar, or less, are literally worth their weight in gold to users.

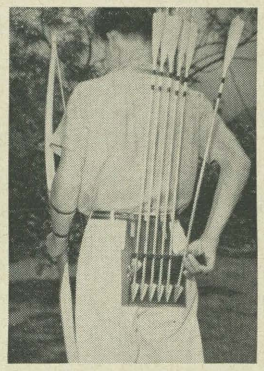
In the very practical, but inexpensive, group of fishing gadgets is the Tailgrip-Scaler, a two-piece, compact device that makes the job of scaling and cleaning fish an easy, short period chore with attendant safety to the person doing the job

To use the Tailgrip-Scaler, the tail-gripper portion, with six rows of gripping teeth and a spring handle that locks in position, is clamped over the tail of one's fish catch, holding the usually slippery fish firmly while the coarse-toothed scaler portion is applied with the angler's other hand. The photo shows the simple, easy manner of using the Tailgrip-Scaler.

The device is capable of tackling the scaling job of any size fish, yet weighs only four ounces and measures only a bit more than 5½ inches in length. It is made of two-piece, zinc plated, corrosion-resistant 24-gauge steel and will last a lifetime, given normal use and care. When not in use, the Tailgrip-Scaler packs compactly, with all working teeth covered and guarded.

Sold by Rochester Sales Company, P. O. Box 498, Havana, Florida, (not Cuba!); price $1.00, postpaid.

The Tailgrip-Scaler is one item that FWFT&T feels should be in every tackle box. You're sure to like it.



If you participate in Florida's two annual bowhunts, or engage in field archery practice between the dates of the scheduled hunts, you will find plenty of practical use for the Howard hunting arrow quiver.

Product of Howard Enterprises, 415 W. Loma Alta, Altadena, California, the quiver is of lifetime grade black rubber construction, designed to hold arrows so that points are protected, so that held arrows cannot rattle or give off feather rustle sounds and cutting edges of broadheads do not touch.

Hung from one's belt in center of back position, the Howard quiver permits arrows to be drawn from their anchored rests from either side, without the usual overhead arm movement that tends to alarm game. Since there are no bulky straps used with the Howard quiver, nor attendant constriction of the bowmen's body movements, arrows may be drawn from any shooting position —kneeling or standing.

The Howard product was an important item of equipment in one of the "action" photos that illustrated **FLORIDA WILDLIFE's** 1956 archery feature article ("Accent on Archery," October 1956 issue). It is used by some of Florida's most expert bowhunters and has proved itself in the field.

The quiver is made in two models—the described version that hangs in fixed position from the user's belt, and the swivel-type model that permits the quiver to swivel around to a full 180 degrees, for easy passage through thick brush.

Price of the standard model is $9.95, while the deluxe, swivel-style model that rotates a practical 180 degrees—or a full 360 degree circle, if needed—is $12.95. This price tag includes a wide leather belt, not furnished with the standard ($9.95) model.

When ordering swivel-style, state your waist size and whether left or right handed. You don't have to give such information when ordering the standard model.

Both models come equipped with a rain protector.

An ideal Christmas gift for a bowhunter.

8,000 REDHEADS

(Continued from Page 22)

low over the sea. But the dawn brought with it only a singleton drake scaup which Dick promptly dispatched with his well-worn 12 gauge pump. Then, to make matters worse, a half hour later the wind shifted abruptly—leaving us on the weather shore instead of the lee.

I knew what that meant. I put down my cameras and proceeded to gather up for moving to a new location the dozen homemade decoys with high white sides that I'd brought along. Dick had asked me at the last minute to provide a boat and some deeks. The boat was easy, but all I'd had in the way of decoys at the moment was a box of lead-gray and white scaup blocks which I'd made by hand up in New Jersey years ago, and which I'd discovered tucked away in a far corner of my attic—"broadbill stools" as the hunters called them up North.

I didn't know it then, but these homemade stool were to produce a bonanza for us.

This began almost as soon as we'd gotten settled once more. We'd begun to see small flocks of ducks in the distance; ragged lines that seemed to break and mend again as they flew uncertainly in search of shelter from the rising wind. But now the sky was really starting to play host to huge flocks of a size I hadn't seen in years.

One of these pitched down immediately behind the island where we'd left the boats and I saw Macomber stand up and stare long and hard at this big raft of wind-ruffled wildfowl. It seemed obvious that the USF&WS man was doing a lot of thinking, yet I noted he said nothing to his companion in the blind as he settled down again.

Suddenly, at my back I felt ducks coming in. One, two, three . . . a dozen . . . I could see them now. Suddenly there were a half hundred . . . then more as they swooped low with a great rustling *wh-o-o-sh* of sound. Immediately, without a gun being fired, they climbed for altitude

once more, hanging there on pumping wings as they looked us over.

I could feel my pulse jumping. I'd never been closer to such a large flight. But I had no gun loaded . . .

BANG! I swiveled in the direction of the sound in spite of myself. A lone pintail drake had come over and now was plummeting down directly upon the well-concealed blind from whence had come the lethal shot load. Instantly, the large bunch of ducks overhead departed.

"I'll never make any worthwhile pictures that way!" I protested guardedly to the unseen shooter. "Let's keep our eyes open and tag the big flocks—not the singles."

The husky black retriever had been given the signal to fetch and now just as he left the bank a pair of teal bulleted in and were gone again almost as quickly when they spied the moving dog. "It always works that way—never fails," I heard someone mutter peevishly.

And then the first of the big aerial armadas hit us! One moment the overcast sky had been completely devoid of wildfowl overhead, then bedlam broke loose as several large flights seemed to converge upon us simultaneously from as many different directions. Those ducks obviously were concerned with but one thing—shelter from the rising storm. And they wanted it right now.

Even as the guns began to *pow-pow-pow* I noted with amazement through the camera lens that newly arriving ducks continued to plane earthward toward us, despite their frantically flaring vanguard.

A heavy drake hit the ground hard alongside my blind. Another, crippled, struck the water right before me with a skittering splash that saw it planing upward again from the surface, momentarily airborne once more and fighting gamely for altitude—only to tumble abruptly end-over-end into the bushes at my back.

I saw two ducks, each climbing wildly side by side, suddenly crumple as one. It was the kind of shooting day that one hears the "old timers" talk about—and younger men dream about.

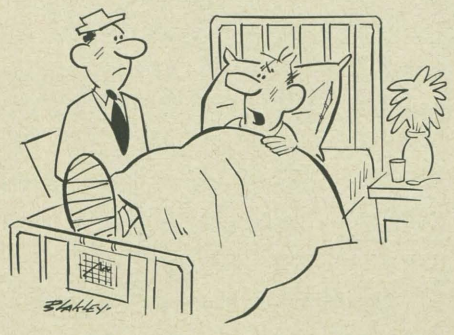
And then, all too soon, it was over. I saw Dick Macomber stand up and stare thoughtfully after the great cloud of departing wildfowl, much as he had at those which first had arrived out in the river.

"Well, what do you make of it, Mac?" I asked, wading toward him as I reloaded with fresh film. "I still can't believe I saw what I did."

The big USF&WS man shook his head slowly in a wonderment that matched my own. "As nearly as I can figure it those were the redheads which have been rafting up out on the Cape Canaveral ocean flats. The Service just completed a survey of them a few days ago. They estimated them to be over 8,000 in number.

"This sudden norther drove 'em ashore in search of shelter. They came piling in here because they could see those white blocks of yours for miles. There will likely never again be shooting like we've had this day . . . "

The others appeared to be in unanimous agreement. As we loaded the boats with the ducks and duffle and fought our way back across the now dangerously rough waters I suddenly knew the answer to a question that had lain unanswered in the back of my mind for years: namely, why I had never permitted my wife to toss out that box of homemade "Yankee" decoys in our attic. ●



"It certainly teaches you a lesson about climbing over a fence with a loaded gun in your hands. This is my fourth lesson."

MUZZLE FLASHES

(Continued from Page 9)

and noticeable by controlling its direction of travel and dispersing its effects, through firm body contact points, a muzzle-compensator, or both.

Firm contact of rifle or shotgun butt-plate with the shooter's shoulder, at the proper angle, is important. Some shooters, especially when firing from the prone position, incorrectly permit a gun's butt-plate to slip down on the flesh of upper arm instead of being cradled in the pocket and curve of the shoulder—and suffer from recoil with each shot.

Straight stocks tend to put recoil directly in line with the shooter's shoulder, for distribution over a wide area. Stocks with too much drop at heel, crooked stocks and small stocks with narrow butt-plates, on the other hand, can be real shoulder-bruisers.

In your particular case, I suggest that you first make sure that you have good stock fit in both your rifle and shotgun; each weapon should fit right and feel right when you shoulder it.

Second, substitute a rubber or neoprene recoil pad for the metal butt-plate of each gun, being careful to maintain proper butt-plate angle and length of pull (distance from butt-plate to trigger).

Consider having a muzzle-brake installed on your .30-06 rifle and a combined selective choke and compensator device on your shotgun. These will tend to dissipate recoil, but will accentuate muzzle blast.

If you're still sensitive to recoil after taking these steps, I can only suggest that you change to a rifle caliber and shotgun gauge of lighter recoil. For example, the .300 Savage with 150 grain bullet would give you only 11 foot pounds of recoil, and the 16 gauge shotgun would also be more pleasant to shoot, while being entirely adequate for all Florida hunting. ●

DUCKS AND DUNES

(Continued from Page 15)

heads in addition to a scattering of mallards, pintails, ringnecks, teal, and other ducks usually considered essentially the fresh water marsh hunters' meat.

The results looked impressive; the combination of ducks and dunes had paid off in widely scattered locations along a big chunk of the Gulf Coast. The following year, that is the season of 1955-56, conditions on some of the inland marshes were somewhat improved but neither of us gave them much attention. We were too wrapped up in a follow up of the previous season's beach gunning. Nor were we disappointed. Naturally every trip was not a smashing, limit-bag success but compared with the results displayed by our fresh water marsh bound friends, we had it made. Some of the few cronies we introduced to this unorthodox type of ducking show signs of becoming true converts. Others to whom we passed the word were too skeptical to make even a feeble stab at it, which is all right with us.

Most of the beach hunting we do involves a quickly dug pit blind and a stool of bluebill blocks. Still there are days on the coast when not even the ordinarily eager bluebills will tumble to the most carefully laid set of decoys, or cock a head to the most seductive notes of the call. At such times they seem to have their own ideas about where to land, or feed, or loaf. It is then that stalking may bring the pay off.

Our method is to select a section of coastline where there are sand dunes, brush, or timber within shotgun range of the water's edge. Then, slipping up to the best vantage point available in the vicinity, we glass the beach and close in waters with a pair of binoculars. When a bird, or flock of them, is spotted in a place where a sneak is possible, we size up the situation, circle accordingly and begin the stalk. It is not what you could call a cinch method, unless you can overlook catbriars, nettles, and sandspurs, one or a combination of these well-armed hazards are sure to be encountered on practically every stalk.

It is a simple matter, in retrospect, to look back to beaches in other parts of the country and to imagine how the pit and block or the dune stalk would have paid off, if only I would have thought of it or had stumbled upon the idea sooner. There are spots on bays, lagoons, wide open sandy-shored sloughs, as well as out on the open beach itself which are neglected by hunters but not by the hunted. I can think of a couple of dozen such spots I have visited for other purposes scattered here and there around the country. I am convinced that many of the bathing and surf fishing beaches of the country offer one of the few practically unexploited duck hunting possibilities.

Give it a bit of thought if you happen to live or to hunt within driving distance of some of our coastal areas. A trip to prospect for duck hunting grounds should be made, of course, after the birds are well gathered up in your particular locality. Certainly all beaches are not duck prospects; perhaps the majority are not even worthy of consideration but man, that red-hot minority! I know of at least three or four converts who will vouch for the fact that some stretches of beach are a lot more than just "maybe" spots.

Perhaps you do not think much of the idea now; I probably wouldn't have either if Bill and I hadn't happened to go fishing one morning when we should have been duck hunting. Now the pair of us are more than ever impressed by the fact that traditional methods and places are not always best in every situation. We know now there is a hunting season payoff to be gathered along what used to appear merely a strip of sand and water of interest only to bathers in the summer and to surf casters in the fall and spring.

Should you happen to be located in the right situation it may be that after looking into this deal you will get so that the approach of fall starts you thinking, as it does us, in terms of ducks and dunes. ●

AJAX, FLORIDA

(Continued from Page 27)

Well, you must have done your part, Mister Editor, because about a week later the bait arrived but not until I had been to the post office every day together with a delegation of eager fishermen and had met every mail train coming into Ajax. By the time the bait arrived the following Saturday, the entourage accompanying me to the post office and to the mail trains looked for all the world like Coxey's army getting ready for an encampment.

Finally the important parcel arrived at Ajax. It was hurriedly opened and the baits given to the contractor and a number of the original dozen were dispensed among the excited mob. We all went our respective ways.

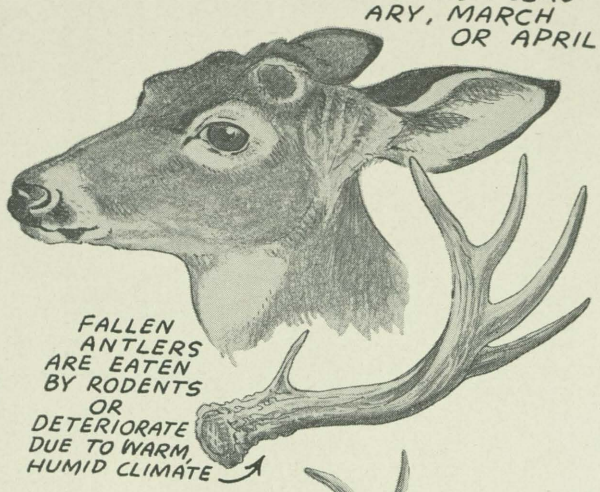
The following Monday we gathered as usual at my store and took stock. Seven different fishermen had used the Swamp-cat in seven different ponds. Not one had landed a fish.

You would think, Mister Editor, that there would have been considerable disencouragement in a situation like this but such was not the case. "Did anybody catch anything?" I asked. "Oh yes," said the contractor, "I caught three nice ones on a new bait called the 'Purple Pup'."

Respectfully,
Plato Winder,
Storekeeper

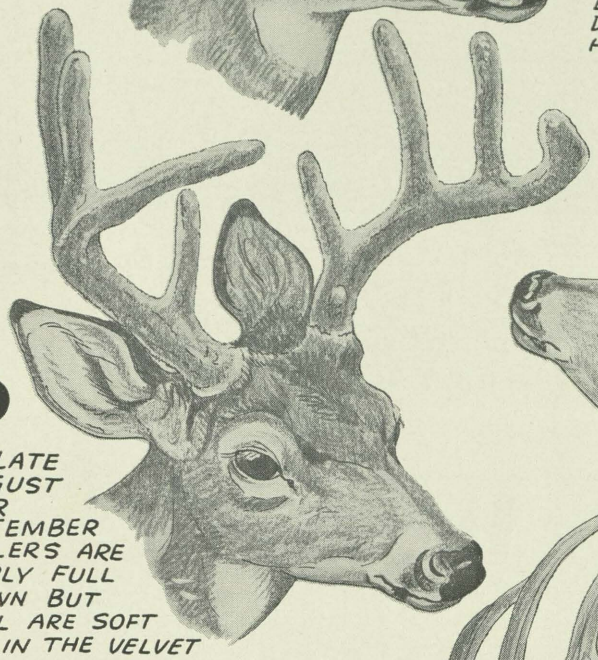
FLORIDA WILDLIFE'S SCRAPBOOK

1 FLORIDA BUCKS DROP THEIR ANTLERS SOMETIME DURING FEBRUARY, MARCH OR APRIL

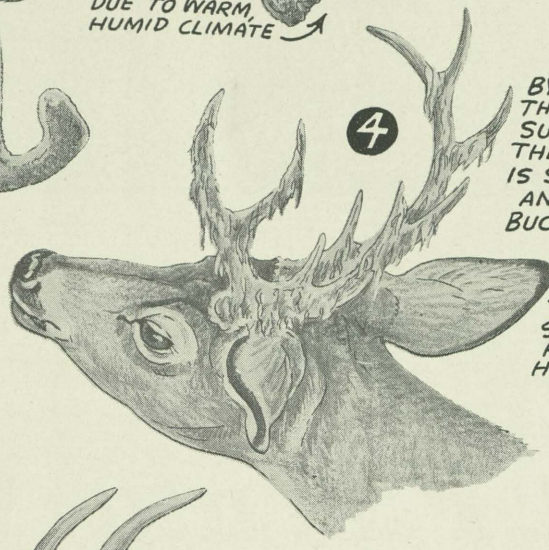


FALLEN ANTLERS ARE EATEN BY RODENTS OR DETERIORATE DUE TO WARM, HUMID CLIMATE

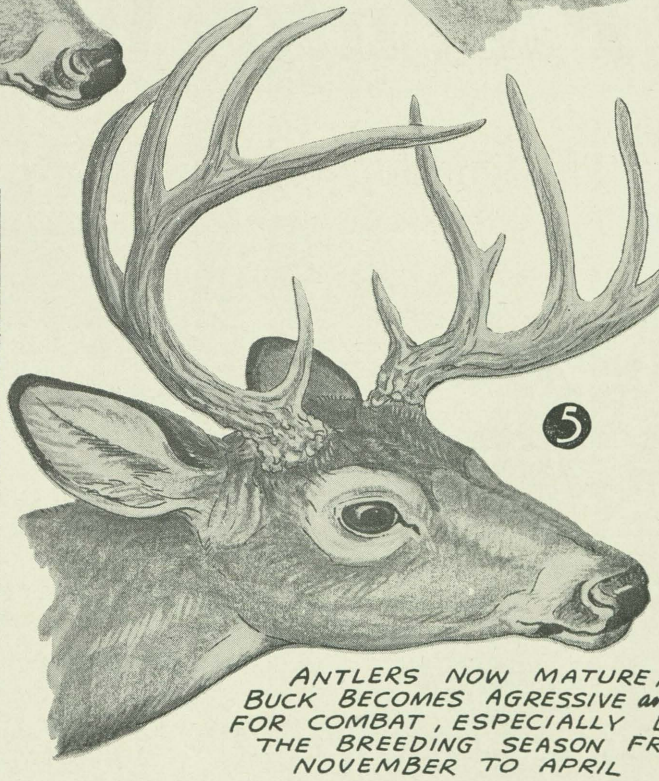
2 ABOUT TWO WEEKS AFTER SHEDDING OF OLD ANTLERS. NEW, SOFT, VELVET COVERED ONES BEGIN TO GROW



3 BY LATE AUGUST OR SEPTEMBER ANTLERS ARE NEARLY FULL GROWN BUT STILL ARE SOFT AND IN THE VELVET



4 BY OCTOBER THE BLOOD SUPPLY TO THE VELVET IS SHUT OFF AND THE BUCK SPENDS MUCH TIME RUBBING THE DRIED SKIN OFF HIS NOW HARDENED ANTLERS



5 ANTLERS NOW MATURE, THE BUCK BECOMES AGRESSIVE and READY FOR COMBAT, ESPECIALLY DURING THE BREEDING SEASON FROM NOVEMBER TO APRIL

Wallace Hughes

ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE HAPPENINGS IN NATURE IS THE ANNUAL SHEDDING AND REGROWTH OF ANTLERS BY THE BUCK WHITE-TAILED DEER - THESE DRAWINGS SHOW THE VARIOUS STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANTLERS AT DIFFERENT TIMES THRUOUT THE YEAR - A YOUNG BUCK BORN IN APRIL WILL HAVE ONE INCH LONG, VELVET COVERED ANTLERS DURING HIS FIRST WINTER - AT ABOUT 1 1/2 YEARS OF AGE HE WILL HAVE SPIKE ANTLERS 5 TO 6 INCHES LONG - SIZE OF ANTLERS FROM THEN ON IN IS DETERMINED BY THE HEALTH OF EACH GIVEN BUCK AND THE QUALITY OF THE HABITAT IN WHICH IT LIVES - AT AGE 4 HE MAY HAVE 8 POINT ANTLERS - VERY OLD BUCKS DECLINING IN VIGOR MAY REVERT TO SPIKE ANTLERS

DEER ANTLERS

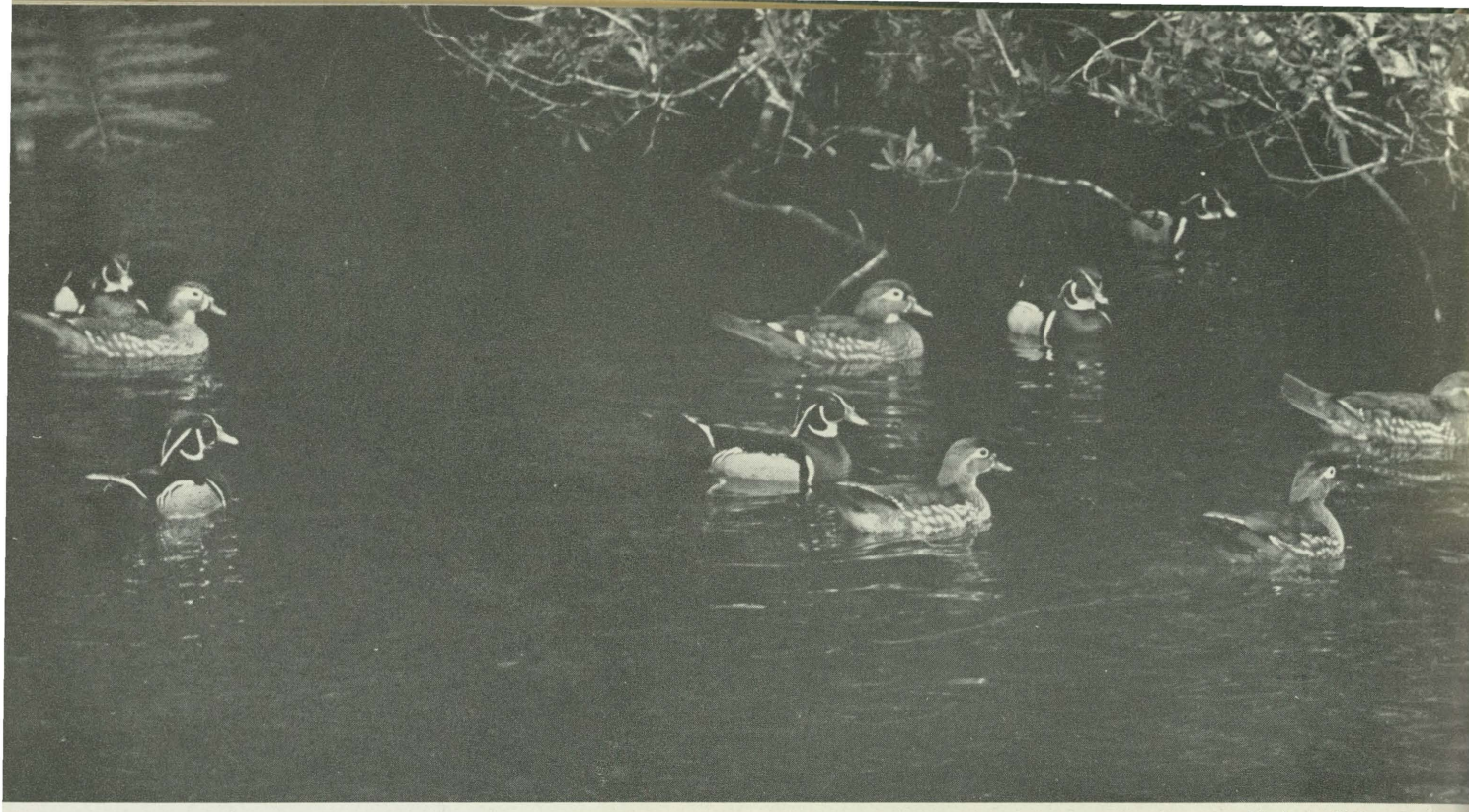


Photo by Wallace Hughes

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